

LA300 – Issues: Sash & Dash

National OA Adviser Training

Session Length: 25 Minutes

Overview:

Sash & Dash is an issue every lodge experiences. It is best described this way: Scouts and Scouters go through the induction process, receive their sash and flap and never get involved with the lodge at any level. They have earned their OA badge and they are done. This session will give you some ideas to help mitigate this issue

Purpose of Session:

To help you and your lodge mitigate “Sash and Dash”

Session Outline:

This session will explain how you, as the adviser, can work with your lodge, chapters and units to have a better relationship so that those elected to become members of the Order of the Arrow stay active in the lodge after their Ordeal.

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The objectives of this session are simple. To help you and your lodge minimize the “Sash and Dash”. From identifying weaknesses in your unit election and induction process, to developing ideas to fix these issues and to help retain new members.

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What is “Sash and Dash”?

Scouts or Scouters who go through the induction process, receive their sash and do not retain their membership in the lodge by becoming dues paying, active members. In other words, they get their sash and lodge flap and we never see them again.

The problem is found in all lodges in the OA. We will never be able to completely eliminate “sash and dash”, but hopefully we can minimize it.

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When you attend scouting events around your council, you will see a number of examples of “Sash and Dash”. People wearing the lodge flap that you’ve never seen at any lodge event. They have their OA sash on at their Eagle Court of honor. The sash is still clean and crisp with no signs of use.

And if you ask them about it, you get the answer of “I’ve earned my OA so I don’t need to show up any more.

Sound and Look familiar?

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Can we stop it? Not completely. JTE (Journey to Excellence) statistics over the past 5 years show that we as an organization have a large drop from those elected to those who actually participate in their ordeal. The statistics also show that a large number of lodges cannot meet a minimum of 30% Brotherhood conversion.

We need to remember that the image a Scout or Scouter has of the OA will be made prior to being elected. If your lodge is active in the council and districts, the OA will be seen as something they want to be part of. An active lodge will also be a positive image for the newly elected Arrowman who now will want to seal his membership and become a Brotherhood member.

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Becoming a member of the Order of the Arrow is part of the Induction process. Let’s look at the Induction process in your lodge. Are you following the Ten Induction Principals as outlined in the OA handbook? There is a PDF that goes over them in more detail to download as part of this session. We won’t get into any detail at this time but by following them, the 100 years of experience the OA has will help your lodge minimize your “Sash and Dash”.

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Your lodge’s relationship with your Troops is probably the biggest key to help stop “Sash and Dash”. We’ve all seen how bad publicity can taint an organization.

So, what do the troops in your lodge think of the OA? Do they look forward to your annual Unit Election and Camping promotion visits?

Does your lodge actively work with the units OA Troop Representative? For more details on how the OA Unit Representative program works, see session LA-110 OA Relationships with Units. The OA Rep and his Adviser will be a positive asset and a great influence in your TR.

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Think about how the OA Unit Rep and his adviser can give you a great “in” in your units. If your Arrowmen are active in their units after they become OA members, they can influence younger scouts into wanting to become Arrowmen. Think of the opportunities that are lost by not utilizing our members to influence other Scouts.

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Unit Elections can be one of the most positive or negative images for your lodge. A well planned and well executed election is critical for a positive image for the OA in a candidate’s and Unit Leader’s mind. This may be the first time a younger Scout sees the OA.

How can you ensure that the experience is positive? By training your Unit Election teams. The LLD program has a great training program to use at your lodge’s annual LLD. Every chapter should have a number of trained teams. Here is a link to the LLD training area with session on inductions and membership: <http://lld.oa-bsa.org/2012/category-list.php?c=4>

Some things to emphasize with your unit election teams:

- Don’t let the team read from a script and make sure that they don’t hide behind a script while talking to the Scouts.
- They must be in full Scout uniform with their sash.
- After the election, follow up with the candidates is key. A well-crafted letter sent directly to the individual from the lodge chief should include congratulations on their election, information about the Ordeal process, and when and where they will be held. The Unit Leader should also receive a copy of this letter so that he can help the Scout prepare and encourage him to attend.

As stated earlier, great public relations (PR) such as dynamic unit elections or camp promotions will develop great unit relations (Troop Relations, TR).

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So many factors go into a positive ordeal experience for your candidates. Again, it comes down to training. Getting your candidates to have a “feeling of connection” prior to the Ordeal will help inspire them. This can be done through the “Elangomat” or mentoring program

Other things you should think about for a positive Ordeal experience are:

- Do you have a team assigned to greet everyone as they arrive at the Ordeal site?
- Is your Pre-Ordeal well done and meaningful?
- Are all ceremonies visually impressive and do they inspire?
- The Ordeal ceremony also needs to be well done and meaningful

- Your service projects need to consist of well planned, quality projects. They should not be “make work”. They need to be meaningful and whenever possible they should be able to be completed by the candidates during the Ordeal
- Lodge members need to respect the Ordeal process and the candidates.
- Quality, well trained Elangomats.
- Just as important, the candidates must be engaged in a positive, fun way before they leave the Ordeal weekend. We must make them want to come back!

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A quality Elangomat program can be one of the most important tools for your lodge to use to retain new members. The key is constant positive communications with the candidate prior to and after the Ordeal. The Elangomat program, both prior to and at the Ordeal is a proven system. Utilizing an Extended Elangomat program will focus on the new member after the Ordeal and can lead to near 100% Brotherhood conversion. Both programs require willing and dedicated Arrowman to be mentors/friends with the candidate/new member. There are a number of sessions on Elangomat and Extended Elangomat training available on the OA training site: Here is a link: <http://lld.oa-bsa.org/2012/search.php?q=elangomat>

Training your new and existing Elangomats is the best way for them to learn their role in the induction process and how they provide a meaningful experience for new members. Teach them and have them understand the 10 Induction Principles (Attachment 1)

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They have the sash, now what?

A new member orientation after the ordeal ceremony will instill an image of how your lodge works. It must be high energy. And it must be concise and informative. Remember, your new members will be tired. A great LLD session on this is located at: <http://lld.oa-bsa.org/2012/session.php?s=67>

Key things to include are:

- A quick recap of the Ordeal experience and what the OA means.
- Who the key leaders of the lodge and chapters are
- How they can get involved
- A Lodge Calendar of Events
- What the “Jump Start Program” is and how it can help them understand what occurred during the weekend
- FUN events – Remember, Service is at the foundation of our Order, but we must create a culture of FUN in our lodges, and it must begin at the Ordeal!

You may want to break in to Chapters to do this so that the group is not so large.

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Post Ordeal Communication is key!

- Send a welcome letter, Facebook message or Twitter message from the Lodge Chief
- Use the Extended Elangomat program as mentors
- Create a buddy system (Extended Elangomat) to get new members to meetings and events
- Emphasize the “Honor”:
 - Remember, we are elected by our Peers.
- Keep good records of the entire induction process from who was elected to who goes through the Ordeal. LodgeMaster makes this easy
- The Ordeal is just the beginning of their Journey in the Order of the Arrow.

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You can make a difference. You cannot do everything, but by setting the example, building a quality unit election and induction team you can help stop “Sash and Dash” in your lodge.

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The theme of the 2009 National Order of the Arrow Conference was “The Power of One”. That theme still resonates today. Remember, it only takes one person, one act, or one experience to influence our new members positively.

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Think of fixing “Sash and Dash” as the Stickiness Factor. That is what we’ve been talking about in this session...getting our new members to “stick”. As you think of ways to solve “Sash and Dash”, think of ways to make your lodge “sticky”. Get everyone involved in all the many parts of the lodge. It will help your lodge become “sticky”.

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Let’s recap what we’ve learned:

Minimizing “Sash and Dash” takes a concerted effort from many fronts to succeed.

- Positive Unit Elections
- Meaningful Inductions and Ceremonies
- Positive Service Projects
- Elangomat and Extended Elangomat programs
- Lots of positive Communication

- Good Chapter programs (if your lodge uses chapters)
- A strong OA Troop/Team Representative program
- FUN

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Finally, get them involved. This is key. You need to give them something to do or they won't stay interested. Remember to make it FUN. The friendships that are built in the Order of the Arrow will be long lasting. Help your new members be a part. Not apart.



Attachment 1

The Ten Induction Principles

(Taken from the Order Of the Arrow Handbook)

Purpose: The purpose of the induction is to encourage and inspire each candidate to develop firm individual dedication to the ideas of brotherhood and cheerful service.

Eligibility: The right to earn Ordeal membership is given only by the scouts of a candidate's home unit election. Only the candidate can overrule their decision.

Candidate's Compliance: The candidate has the continuous choice of meeting the tests of the Ordeal to the best of his or her ability or of withdrawing.

Members' Compliance: All members participating in the induction must respect and comply with the tests of the Ordeal to the extent allowed by their responsibilities.

Discretion: In cases where strict application of the tests and requirements of the induction is not possible, the lodge may choose an alternative that will best preserve the spirit of the induction and the quality of the candidate's experience.

Importance of the Individual: All actions and procedures must recognize the worth, dignity, and separate identity of the individual and present of potential ability to self-govern.

Generosity: The attitude of members toward the candidate must be one of acceptance, respect, understanding, sincerity, friendly encouragement, support, and trust.

Focus: Everything in the lodge-created environment must direct the candidate to the central meaning of the induction, without distraction.

Symbolic Progression: No symbol or symbolic procedure should be mentioned or used unless and until it is called for in the authorized ceremonies.

Active Membership: Lodge policy must recognize that if a member understands the obligation of the Order and is striving to fulfill it as an active member, the member's dedication in itself accomplishes the major service in the lodge.