Here are some of the numbers behind my[**School Presentation for Recruiting Sixth Graders**](http://inquiry.net/adult/recruiting.htm).

Presenting the Scoutcraft program as it is described in our Federal Charter is just like the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

After the encounter these sixth-graders feel undeniably drawn to an isolated area in the wilderness where something spectacular is about to happen.

28% of them get there, and the rest sit at home and play with their mashed potatoes.

**Numbers of sixth-graders who (in front of their peers) signed my "Yes! I Want to Go Camping!" list asking me to call their parents:**

**October 1, 2007 = 38 out of a total audience of 53  (72%)

September 29, 2006 = 34 out of 42  (81%)**

The 11-person difference in the total audience was due (at least in part) to the fact that the sixth-grade boys are divided into two gym classes, so I always gave the presentation twice in the same day. In 2007, a number exuberant boys from the first presentation got out of their class (study hall?) during the second presentation just to see it all again.

**May 2004 = 25 signed the call-up list.**

This was a spur of the moment, end of the school-year presentation. I believe that something else was happening in the school at the same time, so attendance was optional. The total audience was much smaller but I did not count it.

The extra six months of maturity made a surprising difference in how quickly those that did register adapted to the Patrol Method. Likewise, only three of them could attend summer camp because of the short notice, but I did not loose any of the boys who did not attend summer camp (significant if you compare that to the retention rate of Webelos Crossovers who do not attend summer camp, which in my experience is near zero).

That fall the 12 year-old Patrol Leader recruited all his seventh-grade friends and built the number in his Patrol up to 12, so despite the low number of initial sign-ups, the total number of registered Scouts was surprisingly close to the usual 15 in other years.

**November 2004 = 37 signed the list.**

I did not count the total audience back then.

I don't have any of the sign-up sheets from the 1990s.

**Breakdown of the 38 sixth-graders (out of an audience of 53) who signed the "Yes, I Want to Go Camping!" list on October 1, 2007**

(Remember that "reasons" given over the phone may or may not be true):

**"Yes" to phone inquiry that afternoon = 19**

I held the recruiting presentation on Mondays, the day our Troop meets. The idea is to get them to a meeting that night before the euphoria wears off. Some can not make it on such short notice, but that number is much smaller than the number who lose interest if you wait even a single day (to give yourself more time to call everyone on the list).

Of these 19, the total who actually registered = 11, plus 4 friends, brothers, etc., for a total of 15 registered new Scouts. 100% of those who attended the first meeting did register with the Troop.

**Parents who said "Yes" on the phone but never showed up = 8**

2 twins (mother bragged that they were the top popcorn sellers in Cub Scouts, but they would wait until after hunting season to join in February).

1 mother is a Girl Scout leader, but decided to wait until May after hockey.

1 mother of Asian boy wavered for months despite the efforts of one of the new moms - said "no time" at first on phone, then decided to join when other mom explained she did not have to attend meetings as in Cubs, but then finally decided son was too young for camping.

4 hid behind voice mail for three callbacks after they did not show up at meeting as promised.

Back in the 1990s I was able to increase the number of registered Scouts to about 20 by continuing to call the parents who said "Yes" on the first call but never made it to the first meeting. What I found was that such families tend to be dysfunctional and disruptive -- not worth the effort.

**Answered "Maybe" on the phone = 7**

1 No car
2 Football - call back November
1 Religion classes - call back in May
1 Hockey practice - call back in May
2 Basketball - call back in November

"Call back later" never actually works. You have to get them to the first meeting that night, or the next week at the latest.

**Answered decisive "No" to phone call = 4**

1 Tae Kwon Do
1 Ice Hockey
1 Changed mind
1 Monday is busy

The number of decisive "No" answers is often the smallest category (The number of "no" due to ice hockey is usually higher).

**No phone number, illegible, disconnected = 2**

I actually spend a considerable amount of time figuring out illegible phone numbers, which does pay off. Something that I added to my sales pitch (when the entire auditorium is frantic with the desire to be a Boy Scout) is the warning that "If you do not print your phone number clearly, we may never be able to find you." It worked! In previous years the number was as high as 4-6.

**Hid behind voice mail for four attempts to call = 6**

In years past the number of parents who hid behind voice mail and answering machines was about twice as high, but this year I started leaving as part of the message "Despite the similarity in name, OUR PROGRAM IS NOT THE SAME AS CUB SCOUTS. Parents are not required to attend meetings or campouts." I started adding that on the third round of phone calls, and in less than an hour I added 3 registered Scouts to my total! Face it, a lot of people hate our Cub Scout program.

Cub Scouts is probably the leading reason why most boys (and parents) never consider Boy Scouts. Some years when polled at their first Scoutmaster Conference, about half of our new Scouts told me they dropped out of Cub Scouts. I think that such dropouts make better outdoor Scouts than boys who stick with the program long enough to cross over.

Also, when my Wood Badge buddies watch my presentation and then observe me working the phones, they tell me that I could "double" the number of registered Scouts if I switch to a different sales approach with the parents, emphasizing the importance of "Eagle Scout" on their son's resume, and the benefits of learning "leadership."

In years past I tried that but decided that it was a devil's bargain. Parents who are motivated by Eagle Scout tend to be helicopters, and their sons tend to be too busy (with all of their other resume-building activities) to be long-term Patrol Leaders.

Give me a backpacking First Class Scout over an Eagle Scout any day!

That said, if you think that "Eagle Scout" is a good thing (rather than second only to Wood Badge in its destructive effect on the Patrol Method), and stress it over the phone with the parents, then your results with my Recruiting Presentation may be higher than the numbers above.

**Retention rate one year later = 3 boys dropped out.**

1 mother said (referring to the meetings her son attended) "Oh, he absolutely loved it," but decided her son was "too young to go camping -- maybe later."

1 (the smallest boy) was a gifted trouble-maker who started fights (as he did at school) and then ran to his parents for protection. He was a master-manipulator who fortunately dropped out after a couple of months when we stood up to his "my son can do no wrong" parents.

1 was just not an outdoor boy.