

Girl Scout with a Cause Blog Analysis

Introduction:

This document analyzes a series of blog posts from "Girl Scout with a Cause," a blog likely authored by a volunteer or concerned member of the Girl Scouts organization. The posts collectively reveal a deep concern and frustration regarding several aspects of the Girl Scout structure, operations, and direction, particularly at the national (GSUSA) level. Recurring themes include governance issues, financial transparency, the treatment of volunteers and members, the implementation of new technologies, and the overall mission and values of the organization.

Key Themes and Ideas:

Governance & Transparency Issues:

- **Council Autonomy:** A central concern revolves around the perceived lack of respect for the autonomy of local Girl Scout councils. The author highlights the principle that "all Girl Scout troops in all the communities within that territory shall be under its jurisdiction, and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America **shall act through the local council** in its relations with these troops and communities." This raises questions about whether GSUSA is consulting and gaining buy-in from local councils before implementing major initiatives.
- **"Top-Down" Decision Making:** There's a consistent critique of GSUSA's approach, which is seen as imposing decisions on councils without sufficient consultation or consideration of local needs and realities. This is implied in the question: "Did GSUSA receive approval, or at the very least, buy-in from all councils before undertaking this campaign? Just curious."
- **Democratic Process Concerns:** The blog includes a "Democratic Process Solution White Paper" which suggests a desire for more participation and representation within the GSUSA governance structure, possibly stemming from a frustration with the current processes.
- **Network Alignment:** The post titled "Network Alignment: The Next Frontier" indicates an apprehension or pushback to an apparent push for greater centralization and standardization within the Girl Scout network.

Financial Transparency & Resource Allocation:

- **IT Spending:** Several posts express concern regarding the amount of money being spent on IT infrastructure. The titles "We're Spending HOW Much on IT?" and "Press Your Luck: IT Expenses and a Whammy" directly indicate unease about how funds are being allocated in the area of technology.

- **Cookie Sale Finances:** The financial structure of the cookie program is scrutinized, with concern about where the profits ultimately go. The analysis in "The Customer is Always Right?" raises the question, "who owns the unsold cookies?" and argues that if troops own unsold cookies, councils are essentially selling cookies to troop leaders and parents. "When councils own the unsold cookies, the cookie customers are donating to the Girl Scout movement."
- **"Customer" Mentality:** The author, and others in the comments, strongly object to the idea of treating Girl Scout members as "customers," suggesting that it undermines the values and spirit of the organization. One commenter asks, "suppose I wanted to introduce a resolution at the next National Convention which would make it a firing offense for any Girl Scout staff member to refer to any Girl Scout member of any age or status as a "customer". Would I have any votes?" The responses "Got mine," "My vote too!" and "Mine too" show support for that idea.
- **Inventory Risk:** The analysis suggests that the current cookie selling model pushes "inventory risk" onto troops instead of the council.

Volunteer and Member Treatment:

- **Overburdened Volunteers:** Posts like "Volunteer Systems 2.0 Tasks Me" and "Volunteer Systems: D'oh!" suggest frustration with new or evolving volunteer systems, implying an increased workload or poorly designed systems impacting volunteers.
- **Respect and Inclusion:** The piece "Inclusion and the Importance of It" indicates a potential concern or need for further discussion around these issues within the Girl Scouts.
- **Calling Out Inappropriate Behavior:** The post "I've Had IT and I'm Calling People OUT" indicates the author feels there are unacceptable behaviors within the organization and the author will not tolerate it.
- **Toxic Leadership:** The post "Toxic Leadership" clearly suggests negative experiences and a desire to improve that dynamic.

Technology Implementation (VTK):

- **Challenges with VTK:** Several posts reference the "Volunteer Toolkit" (VTK), suggesting there are challenges with its functionality or implementation. Titles like "VTK and You: The Final Countdown (not really)", "VTK and You: The Saga Begins (A Video Series)", and "VTK and You: We've Only Just Begun" suggest that this technology is a significant area of discussion and potential concern.

Preserving Core Values & Mission:

- **Focus on Girls:** The blog emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the primary goal of Girl Scouts should be the girls, rather than the logistical infrastructure, stating "the goal and purpose of our movement is the girls, not the logistical infrastructure put in place to serve the girls."

- **Fundraising vs. Mission:** There is concern that financial aspects (e.g., cookie sales) are overshadowing the core mission of Girl Scouts, and that decisions are being made primarily with profit in mind rather than impact on members.

Recurring Elements:

- **Archived Posts:** The extensive archive sections at the end of every post, dating back to 2014, suggest that this blog has been consistently addressing these issues for a considerable period. This shows a long-standing dedication and concern about these topics.
- **Resource Links:** The consistent inclusion of links such as "Girl Scout Governance", "Girl Scout Catalog Archive", "Council's Own Badge Archive", and others shows an investment in the history of the organization and a desire to promote resources within the community.
- **Unofficial Nature:** The disclaimer "UNOFFICIAL!!!" before "GSSC-MM Resource Links Database" emphasizes the blog's independent perspective and likely indicates dissatisfaction with official GSUSA communication channels.

Conclusion:

The "Girl Scout with a Cause" blog represents a critical perspective on the current state of the Girl Scouts. It highlights the tension between national directives and local needs, financial concerns, and the importance of volunteer empowerment, member well-being, and the organization's core mission. The blog's persistence and focus on these issues suggests a deep commitment to the future of Girl Scouts and a call for reform and greater transparency within the organization.