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Once an Eagle

by Keith F. Luscher
Author, *Prospect & Flourish*



This past weekend I traveled to Virginia to attend my oldest nephew's Eagle Scout Court of Honor. I am proud to share that Christopher Kenneth Gaul of Burke, Virginia is now officially an Eagle Scout!

The experience reminded me of a discussion I had with Ronald F. Mayer, a seasoned producer for AXA Advisors, when I was working on the book *Prospect or Perish*, which is now published by The American College and is being used in the financial services industry. It begged a question from my conversation with Ron, which took place in the summer of 2005:

KFL: What kind of traits do you look for in an agent? What do you look for when you add someone to your team?

RFM: Management was long ago, but the answer to your question is very simple. When I was interviewing it didn't matter how old they were. I would ask the candidate: What was your greatest success and your greatest failure, prior to age fourteen?"

KFL: Before the age of fourteen? That's an interesting question.

RFM: And that's what I was told by a lot of people, and I got a lot of comments and a lot of angry interviewees.

KFL: Many people wouldn't even know how to respond.

RFM: You have to understand the guy who's asking it. My dad died when I was five, so how do you survive something like that? Luckily we had a great network of family. There was never any pity or sorrow, and I've known people whose mom or dad died at a young age and it was pity, pity, pity and their whole life is "Poor me."

And then luckily I was involved with Boy Scouts, and at age thirteen-and-a-half, I went for my first Eagle board review. This is the one that no one ever failed—until me. A father/Scoutmaster asked me "What do you want to do when you grow up?"

I said, "I want to be a pilot." He looked at my merit badges—you needed twenty-one, and I had twenty-eight.

He said, "But you don't have an aviation merit badge."

I said, "That's right, I've read the requirements, and they're outdated—created in the 1920s and 30s. This is the 1960s. They are totally out of date, totally irrelevant, and I will never get the aviation merit badge, but I will become a pilot."

KFL: That wasn't the right answer.

RFM: Very good. It was definitely the wrong answer! The father was, how do we say, very upset, voted no, and the other fathers argued but they were afraid of him.

KFL: So it had to be unanimous?

RFM: Yes. Six months later, the longest six months in my life at fourteen, I came back with a different group of fathers, except one. He asked the same question, he got the same answer, and I was told after I left it got really ugly, because he said no, and the other fathers said, "You're changing your vote. You can't say no. You may not like his answer, but it's an honest answer." I went on to get my Eagle Scout. I went on to air force flight school, but had a little problem with supersonic fighters. But after that setback, I bounced back and became an FAA flight instructor.

KFL: Totally committed.

RFM: You have to be totally committed to your business. You need to ask, in my opinion, how will I be trained, how will I be taught, and will you teach me how to prospect?

Total commitment. Less than four percent of kids who enter Scouting achieve the rank of Eagle. Perhaps you are in a profession where the odds may be against you, either finding new clients or landing that next job. Both Ron and my nephew Chris achieved their goals for two reasons: they didn't give up, and they allowed the support of those who cared about them.

So as you finish out this week and move into the next, reaffirm your commitment. Choose not to give up—if only for today. Before you know it, you too can be like an Eagle, and soar. As they say, "Once an Eagle, Always an Eagle."