

**THE SCOUTING ADVANTAGE**  
**as published in the West Texas Geological Society Bulletin**  
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There is perhaps no other profession in the oil industry that gets questioned more about their job description than the exploration scout. "Just what is it you do?" to paraphrase a typical comment. "Basically I watch what the competition does and handle inter-company trading of information" is the generic answer. I guess we'd all like to believe it's as simple as that.

Scouts are asked to respond to many facets of the industry. This includes activity in drilling and production operations, seismic crews, leasing, acquisition, budgets, personnel, etc. The emphasis of which is instituted in a system and/or guided by managerial direction. Still, other companies' appetites are sufficed by the monitoring of current well information, retrieving historical data, and hunting logs (which in itself can be a layman's time-eating nightmare).

Many of the company scouts of today are asked to have degrees in exploration-oriented fields or experience in operations or optimally both. This is predicated on the basis of not only being able to understand relevant information from outside sources, but being able to convey that to the in-house geologists, geophysicists, engineers, landmen, etc. in terms that make sense. It is essential that the scout possess highly developed interpersonal skills for insured success. Perhaps a

median 75% of a scout's time is consumed with personal interaction. I'm sure I'll get a few phone calls on that statistic from my highly opinionated peers, depending on which side of the paperwork pendulum they're on.

A quality seldom mentioned but one noticed by scouts about their cohorts is self discipline. This job necessitates a great deal of lateral and outside-the-company-walls type of movement. It is not always understood by those who are used to an 8-5 sense of regimentation, and can be frustrating to outside contacts attempting to reach you by phone when they're in their office. It is essential you do both, but the discipline comes in keeping both pleased while completing your tasks and constantly staying in touch.

Well so much for the arm waving of what we do and on the question of worth. A Q. & D. scenario might be one in which someone in one company trades a "little info for a little info or a log for a log" to another company.

Usually, those folks don't realize that seldom would they have to give up anything at the time by using a good scout. Now how much time did so and so take to find and negotiate his deal with the other company while he could have been working on other duties. Admittedly, there are situations which negate this logic but in the overwhelming number of

cases, the scout will determine where to go to cut through the nonsense and deliver. **When you look at one employee delivering over and over again on information the competition has spent millions and millions on to obtain, it doesn't take long to figure his/her salary is miniscule by comparison.** What gives them this advantage, is confidence by their contacts of deliverability when they need something and confidence by their companies' management to operate in a prudent manner with its own data. How does one master and maintain this "balancing act?" It clearly takes time and a concerted effort to nurture conscientious consistency. A scout must develop and hold on to his reputation, for it is his livelihood. Those just dabbling in this arena may quite often be on the down-side of effective time management and over exposure of data.

Most emphasis has been on inter-company workings of the scout for traditional reasons, but there is the addition of assessment, analysis and interpretations which shifts scouting programs into a higher echelon of the business. In the past, the "scout letter" sufficed for many companies. It is essentially a regular report on significant events affecting company interest. This has escalated to computer systems tracking seismic crews, lease-hold emphasis, special acquisitions,

intimate details on drilled wells, budget emphasis, intra-company personnel changes, etc. These all assist the scouts and other personnel in historical benefits but provide up-to-date documentation for forecasting. Granted, not all these are of importance to the independent, but they can delineate trends and highlight details of economic significance to anyone in the business.

The independent who regularly works with scouts can often access (through the scout) unreleased information which may contribute to his prospects. Yet another option however, is the use of a contract scout for a specified length of time. Although these individuals don't normally have the leverage of a large database from which to draw on, they often times have favors owed from a contact base established over the years or have the knowledge of where to look to obtain data in the shortest possible time frame.

There are several commercial data handling companies which serve a useful purpose processing vast quantities of statistics on various facets of the industry, but those in-the-know are aware of a margin of error, lack of completeness and an element of untimeliness in the data. Most companies are just not willing to give up the details on substantial proprietary events without insuring reciprocation, in which case broad-based publication of such data dilutes its value. Hence, a niche of the scout.

No doubt the foundation of any business revolves

around the events and information affecting it. With the status of the oil business today, those who can most quickly obtain and efficiently utilize the accurate information available, will be ahead of those who refrain. In this industry, good scouting can be good business. It can be the advantage!

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