

SEPTEMBER: HOW TO SELL POPCORN WHEN YOU'RE NO LONGER AN ADORABLE CUB SCOUT

MUSIC FULL THEN UNDER

LEE: Welcome, everyone, to the September ScoutCast. We're glad you could join us. What have we got for our listeners this month, Bryan?

BRYAN: Everyone knows Scouting is full of really cool activities like camping and kayaking and building robots, but like everything else on Planet Earth, it costs money. So another big part of Scouting, along with building robots and kayaking and all the other activities, is fundraising.

LEE: It's not too difficult when you're a cute little Cub Scout, and you give a great big smile with those adorable chubby cheeks and start stumbling through your script. You're just so doggone precious, people gladly buy whatever you're selling.

BRYAN: But what about when your Scouts get older and a little less adorable? The Popcorn Scout himself, Donovan Fisher, and his dad, Scott, are here to share with us the secrets. What makes Donovan an expert? Well, he was the third highest selling Scout in 2013 with more than \$23,000 in sales. Did Dad help? Let's find out.

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BRYAN: Donovan Fisher is a 15-year-old Life Scout and Order of the Arrow Brotherhood Member with the Washington Crossing Council in

Doylestown, Pennsylvania, where he serves as Venturing and Exploring Council President. Throughout his Scouting career, Donovan has sold more than \$95,000 worth of Trail's End products to support Scouting. Wow. And Donovan's dad, Scott, is a committee member and fundraising chair for Troop 87, as well as unit commissioner and founder of many local fundraising events like Derby at the Mall. I wrote about Donovan on my blog back in August of 2012, and he's sold a lot more popcorn since. So let's find out how he does it. Scott and Donovan, welcome to ScoutCast, guys.

DONOVAN: Thanks for having us.

SCOTT: Thank you.

BRYAN: Donovan, now that you're no longer an adorable little Cub Scout, as we like to say, what's the secret to selling the most popcorn?

DONOVAN: The main thing is you need to dedicate a lot of time and effort. You always have to go for second-chance opportunities. So if somebody had an excuse or just didn't know right off the bat, I always have to remember every opportunity's a new one and that you don't get just focused or hung up on your sales. I also have to look at every single time I fail and see how I can improve for the next. So if somebody says, "Oh, that's too much calories," I have to look, like, for the microwave bags, they're 320 calories each, but they're really, really big bags. So I would say just divide that by half.

BRYAN: So you're thinking one step ahead of your customer, kind of?

DONOVAN: Yeah.

LEE: Donovan that's great. It sounds like persistence certainly plays a part in that. What are the top three tips for selling?

DONOVAN: My first tip is be prepared mentally. You got to mentally be there. So preparing by drinking a nice drink or eating the food you like. On Saturdays, we eat Chick-fil-A. We have the little nuggets, and they're great just to pop in your mouth in between customers when we're at Lowe's. I also enjoy to watch things that make me feel energized or good; just anything that makes you feel mentally happy.

My second step is make a great first impression. My uniform is always in tiptop condition. I use great words to introduce myself. I always greet someone. The best thing that I love to do is, if somebody's wearing a team sport, I will talk about that first. Any conversations that you can have with somebody is a great start. It's going to be really hard to say no to buy popcorn after that. Another thing is, I wear very bright colored shoes and it starts a lot of conversations.

Now, my third step is make a great second impression. First impressions only get you so far. Since I'm not cute anymore, I need to practice my sales skill. A strong introduction always and telling your story and ask for the sale. If I answer any objections, it's great. Just like that bag of popcorn that was 300 calories, if you split it in half, which is a huge bag, that's only 160. The customer's like, "Oh, that's a pretty good-sized bag." And if you just show (them) how big it is, maybe, have an empty one, and ask for the sale again. If someone says, "Do you have caramel corn?" You can be like, "This caramel corn, almonds, cashews and pecans - that is the best. I enjoy that one a lot!"

The last step is remember your customers from the last year. I keep kind of like an Excel sheet; we use a different program, so I remember what they've gotten last year. And so when I knocked on the door, I can remember, maybe if it's kettle corn, you know that they like some sweet stuff, so you can always say, "Oh, this caramel corn's also sweet." And then, they're like, "Ooh, that sounds delicious," and they buy it.

BRYAN: Donovan, you've given us a lot to chew on, so to speak. No pun intended there. Now, Scott, I want to bring you into this discussion here. I know from experience when I was selling popcorn, that selling a lot of popcorn can turn your house into, almost like, a popcorn museum because in my house, at least, it was just floor-to-ceiling boxes, and the butter smell stayed for weeks after all the popcorn had been passed out to customers. I want to know, first of all, is your house just walls of popcorn, and what is your role in all this, Scott, in helping support Donovan and his impressive efforts?

SCOTT: Our entire house - ceiling to floor, like you said - and Donovan's mom and I do help a lot, but we don't help in the way that many people would think. We're both Scout leaders with multiple units and Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and we help a lot of other Scouts so we kind of see ourselves as his pit crew. Mom will bring drinks if he gets thirsty or a supply that we ran out of. It's really important that Donovan's always the one that's out in front of the customers, and he's the one that's dealing with the businesses and contacts in the community, but we are behind the scenes in helping deliver and provide supplies and transportation and support, and we motivate him. We remind him sometimes of his own goals when he's feeling down and remind him that those walls of popcorn, - they have to go away. That was his goal. Now, of course, his mom would say if cleaning his room or doing the dishes was one of his goals -

LEE: (Laughs)

SCOTT: - she'd be really happy about that.

LEE: Hey, Donovan, not that you had many mistakes or pitfalls to avoid in selling almost \$100,000 worth of popcorn, but for other Scouts, what would you tell them to be aware of in terms of some pitfalls to avoid or mistakes that you typically see some people make?

DONOVAN: I've have a lot of mistakes myself. You got to see what your mistakes are and fix them. But the most common ones are... people aren't prepared for long days. Just like when you're camping or hiking, you have to stay hydrated. It's a lot quicker to use the bathroom than it is to have a headache and get yourself in a bad mood. That's something you have to do - is to stay hydrated.

Eat a great meal. I love on Saturdays to get Chick-fil-A. And on Sundays, my mom would maybe pack a meal, or we would get something on the way like donuts in the morning or something to make you feel good. It's something that is nutritious. Well, not the donuts, but...

LEE: (Laughs)

DONOVAN: ...something that makes you feel good. And then, you're ready for a lot of the day. And you got to remember sun protection or bug protection, or even some of the protection from heat and cold. You really can't predict our weather. And my Scout leaders always tell me, "Wear layers, so you always can just take one off."

Also, assume that the first "no", is just a natural thing a human would say. Many of my sales have become after "no". Sometimes years later. There is this one block that I've gotten every house an order for three years except the second-to-last house on the block. This man would say, "Come back when my wife's home." And we would come back once or

twice the first two years because we always come back if somebody asks us to come back. And she was just never there. But one year, his wife was there, and it was really nice because her son used to be in Scouting, and we talked for a long time. And for the past three years, I've sold to them.

LEE: Wow.

DONOVAN: So I never gave up, and that's definitely a pitfall to avoid. And my dad has an example, too.

SCOTT: Parents often forget that they're just as much a part of their Scout's successes as he or she is. You have to be their champion. Your Scout may even be a champion salesperson or fundraiser, but that's not a simple feat. It takes a lot of skills, sure, but most of all, it takes a lot of dedication and practice and some hard work just as if they wanted to be a great baseball player or something. So if you have a Scout that's down that day, they're not going to succeed to the maximum potential if you're not there backing them and taking good care and coaching and mentoring them.

DONOVAN: Dad, that was a great example.

BRYAN: Now, Donovan, when you go to a place like Lowe's, let's say, and set up outside, are you going to the manager of store yourself and saying, "I'd like to talk to you about setting up and selling popcorn?" Or does your dad do that? How is that handled?

DONOVAN: Me and my dad both go to different businesses. Many times during the year, I'd also show my loyalty. So every once in a while, like, if it's the car

wash, my dad will make sure that next time he goes and gets a car wash, I'll be with him. When we went out to eat, I would make sure I'd talk to the manager and ask the manager if we can use them as a coupon. So it's good for their business as well.

LEE: Donovan, I have to tell you that's very impressive, and I'm glad you're able to share with us. Hey, Scott, why is fundraising so important?

SCOTT: When people mention they feel that it's too big a priority of the Boy Scouts to spend time fundraising, the analogy that I always use is that, we as parents, would love to spend 100 percent of our time with our families and with our children, and when you, in reality, break down the hours that you're awake during the day, you spend the majority of your time at work. Do you really want to be at work away from your family? No, but that means that your priority is to provide for your family. And it's the same way in Scouting. We have to allocate a certain amount of those efforts to provide for our Scouting family and our Scouting units. And a Scout should pay their own way, and that really imparts that knowledge that the units can't go camping for free. So it's very important that Scouts raise their own funds and sell a product and really have something that they can stand behind as opposed to just expecting everything to be given to them.

LEE: Great analogy. Hey, Donovan, so how did you figure out these selling techniques, and what resources are available for other Scouts to learn more about these tips?

DONOVAN: Every time you got a no, you need to evaluate why there was a no. Sometimes you need to stop and ask yourself why are you in a funk. If things are working out poorly on one day, then it's probably not all your customers. You're probably that problem. So you got to stop and figure

out why you are that problem and fix it. If it's because you are dehydrated or you need food, you just got to evaluate and take appropriate measures. Also, learning from great mentors is very important. I've learned from my dad. I've also learned from many mentors like Anderson which used to be a top seller before me. And Elian, which is the top seller; he's a little younger than me. And we were all at this event one time for a popcorn kick off, and we went into a corner and just talked about popcorn. No matter how much you know, you always can learn more.

BRYAN: Donovan, is there anything about popcorn sales and your secrets to success that we haven't discussed that you wanted to share with our listeners?

DONOVAN: First, my dad has one.

SCOTT: The best advice that I can give to Scouts and parents and leaders and even to the customers is always remember that Scouts are not selling popcorn. As the cost of the popcorn and the packaging and the shipping all go up, they get multiplied many times over to make sure that our Scouts can still get 70 percent to go to support Scouting. The great experiences of Scouting and building our future leaders are keeping our young people in touch with nature, with his or her faith, and with community and family, but their self-confidence, that's what our Scouts are selling. And when you look at it that way, no price is too expensive to buy some great Scout popcorn or pretzels.

BRYAN: Well said.

DONOVAN: You can never forget that selling popcorn can help support local Scouts and also a very great way to support the men and women that serve our country every day. More than \$95,000 of popcorn sales that I've made in my Scouting career, I am proud that my customers have asked that over

\$20,000 of popcorn be given to our troops. At the end of every sale, I would always say, "It's so nice that we have the freedom to eat Scout popcorn in the comfort of our homes, but there are men and women all over the world protecting that freedom. Wouldn't you love to add some popcorn to your order to thank them?" And I've gotten over \$20,000 of popcorn doing that.

BRYAN: Those men and women serving overseas getting some Scout popcorn - that's awesome, and you know they appreciate it, too.

LEE: Well, Donovan and Scott, I'm sure our listeners will definitely be able to get some use out of this discussion. I've got to tell you, I'm so impressed with you, Donovan, in terms of the challenges you've accepted, the perseverance that you've displayed, and the opportunity that you've taken advantage of. It's just been remarkable. Thank you so much for joining us on ScoutCast.

DONOVAN: Thank you for having me. I hope that the Scouts all over the country will be able to sell tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars more popcorn by doing some of the things we've talked about today. Scouting is very important to me, and knowing that I have been able to make an impact in more Scouting lives all over the country is even better than me reaching my own sales goals. So thank you again.

BRYAN: Don't go anywhere because we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips.

(CubCast – Asking for Help)

BRYAN: And now, here we go with September's reminders and tips.

LEE: Your troop open house or first-nighter should be held soon if you haven't done so already. And don't forget to submit all new youth and adult applications and registration fees to the Council Service Center. That's right... you have to turn in the money.

BRYAN: (Chuckles) And remember, for every adult wanting to join scouting, youth protection training is a requirement within 30 days of submitting an application. If you can't attend a council-led training session to get your youth protection training certificate, you can take the training online.

LEE: Absolutely anyone, especially parents and potential leaders can take the online training by creating a my.scouting account. Just go to scouting.org and click the MyScouting tab at the top of the page.

BRYAN: September is *Boy's Life* magazine's special STEM issue. We're running stories about STEM-related Scout events, fun science experiments, a look into the future of space settlement, and more.

LEE: And if that isn't enough to satisfy your STEM appetite, *Scouting* magazine also has many STEM-related articles. Be sure to check them out.

Begin music under:

LEE: Well, as informative as this has been the music cue means the September ScoutCast has come to an end. Thanks to Scott and Donovan Fisher for letting us know there's more to selling popcorn than just being adorable.

BRYAN: Now if there are other topics you like to hear about or just want to let us know how we're doing, send us an email to ScoutCast@scouting.org. or a tweet to @BSAScoutCast. So with that, I'm Bryan Wendell...

LEE: And I'm Lee Shaw. Now, let's get poppin'.

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