

FINDING CHAPTER OFFICERS

Slide 1 already up - Finding Chapter Officers and How a Shadow Officer Program Can Help

Good afternoon. I'm Jane Hodges from Chapter F in Bozeman. I'm going to talk about how my chapter's Nominating Committee finds Officers and Convention Delegates and how the addition of a Shadow Officer Program helped us and can help you. Since the subject is complicated, I'm going to use slides to help illustrate points. If you brought along copies of the slides from the convention package on our Montana Website, you can use those to simplify your note-taking.

How many of you have trouble filling the President's position in your chapter? And how many of you have trouble filling other positions, as well? You're not alone. I've heard from State Board members that these are common problems. I have a possible solution for you - a more efficient Nominating Committee and a Shadow Officer Program. And what, you might ask, is that?

Advance to slide 2 - What IS a Shadow Officer Program?

Two and a half years ago, my chapter implemented a Shadow Officer Program, and here's how it works. Each of our serving Officers has someone "shadowing" her, looking over her shoulder and being mentored behind the scenes. When it's time for "Officer turnover," that Shadow is installed in the position she has been shadowing. Since she has just completed a time of observation and training, she is knowledgeable about her role and ready to hit the ground running.

Like many chapters, we were having trouble finding members who wanted to serve as President. Having Shadow Officers has eliminated that problem, and we now have Presidents tentatively lined up for several years in the future. The program has been so effective that I was asked to give a workshop on the subject, in case other chapters wanted to give it a try.

Before I discuss how you can start a Shadow Officer Program in your chapter, I need to back up and talk about chapter Nominating Committees in general, since the program is really just an extension of the work those committees should already be doing. Even if you decide not to start a Shadow Program, perhaps your committee could be run more efficiently, so I'll share some ideas that may help.

How many of you have ever served on your chapter's Nominating Committee? If you haven't, you may not really know how it works.

Our P.E.O. Constitution gives no guidelines for the operation of Nominating Committees. The bylaws of my chapter simply state that "a committee of three members shall be appointed by the president at the first meeting in November to find Officer and Convention Delegates and Alternates." Here's how our committee operates.

Advance to slide 3 - Nominating Committee

In early November, the committee is appointed and the names of its members are announced to the chapter. It's chaired by a past Chapter President and has two other members – preferably another Past President, plus a long-time member who knows her sisters well and understands the functions of each office. The committee meets in November or early December, but has occasionally waited till January to accommodate the schedules of its members. Generally, one two-hour meeting is sufficient to develop the proposed slates of Officers and Convention Delegates and Alternates. It's held in a home or another quiet place, where the confidential conversation will not be overheard. Some prep work should be done in advance. More about that later.

Let's envision a hypothetical chapter and assume we sit on its newly-appointed Nominating Committee. It's a good idea to establish some guidelines for the committee, based on the chapter's practices for selecting officers.

Advance to slide 4 - Possible Nominating Committee Guidelines

In my chapter, Officers are generally expected to serve in a position for two years. They're elected for one year but are almost always reinstalled for a second. After her two-year term is up, we normally don't ask any sister to serve in an office she's already held. New members are not asked to serve during their first year, and after that, frequently start as Guard or Chaplain. Although all seven officer positions are important, there are three in particular which help to prepare future presidents. Let's call those "key roles." Here's why they are helpful. A Treasurer becomes very familiar with all chapter income and expenditures. A Recording Secretary learns so much about P.E.O. and chapter members, as she carefully listens and records what happens in every meeting. A Corresponding Secretary must familiarize herself with all our P.E.O. forms, and learns a lot in the process about membership issues and how they are reported. After holding several offices, including 2 or 3 of those "key jobs," our sisters may serve as Vice President, then "move up" to the presidency. Finally, we try to avoid asking previous presidents to serve again, unless we have an "emergency situation," like a president moving out of town on short notice – which has actually happened to us. For our hypothetical chapter, let's adopt those same policies to guide the Nominating Committee.

Before the committee meets, some research needs to be done in advance, probably by the Chair. She looks at the entire membership list of the chapter and considers each sister. Using old program books, she compiles information about the ones who might be potential Officers. She lists their past offices, committee chair positions, and any other leadership positions held (such as chairing a fundraiser, a Founders' Day celebration, or other special event). Other factors may be considered, such as the person's eagerness to serve, current life circumstances, and any relevant interests and talents. Availability is also a consideration, since Officers should be able to come to most, if not all, meetings unless they are job-sharing. The Chair probably won't know what jobs those who have transferred in from other chapters have held, so she'll need to ask.

Compiling this list is a time-consuming process. The more members in your chapter, the longer it will take. However, the good news is that the list only needs to be prepared once, then updated annually to reflect new jobs held and new members added.

Let's assume that there are 20 members in our hypothetical chapter who might possibly serve as Officers. The list is then whittled down to 10, the ones who appear to have the most potential and availability at this time.

Advance to slide 5 - Member List and Jobs Needed

You'll see that next to each name, previous jobs are listed. The member who has held the most jobs is put at the top and we'll call her Sister 1. Looking at the bottom of the list, you'll see new initiates. They've made the list because, as soon as they became P.E.O.s, they started volunteering to help. The names of members not very active currently (perhaps because of age, jobs, young children, or ailing family members) do not appear. They have been moved to a "not now, maybe later" list, for possible future use.

The next step is to consider which additional jobs would help prepare each sister for the presidency, if she were interested in that position in the future. We'll add that information in the 3rd column. Sister 1 is the current Vice President and has been Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Guard. The only other job that might help her prepare for the presidency is that of Corresponding Secretary.

(Advance)

Sister 2 could benefit from the job of Recording Secretary and perhaps another term as Vice President, since it's been several years since she served in that position.

(Advance)

Sister 3 would be better prepared if she held the positions of Vice President, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary.

(Advance)

The rest of the column is filled in, using the same logic.

(Advance 7 times till all filled in)

If the Officers from last year have another year in their current jobs, we can just confirm that they're still willing to serve and skip the next few steps. Otherwise, let's proceed with developing a "draft slate" of new Officers.

Advance to slide 6 - Filling in the Draft Officers' Slate

On the left is the chart we just completed. Let's begin filling in the slate on the right with the President's position. Following the chapter's policy, we'll be asking the current Vice President to serve as President, and she'll be expecting our call.

In your own chapter, if you have a different system and your Vice President does NOT automatically move up, look at the person whose name is at the top of the list – in other words, the person with the most experience. Usually, she's going to be your choice for President. You may not have anyone whom you feel is ready. Just do the best you can to select the person who is the most capable and prepared. If you decide to start a Shadow Program, next term you'll be in much better shape, with someone who's been shadowing the President and is ready to step into that role.

In our example, the person at the top of the list – the current Vice President – would be the clear choice, even if she weren't already "moving up" to the Presidency. She's held two of the three "key jobs" – Treasurer and Recording Secretary – as well as Guard and is well-prepared.

(Advance)

Now, that we've picked the president, let's fill the Vice President's slot. The second person on the list has been Vice President, Treasurer, and Corresponding Secretary in the past. In recent years, she has been working full-time but has indicated that she's once again available to be an Officer. Let's ask her to serve again as VP, to get her back in the groove before serving as President in the following term.

(Advance)

Then, let's fill the 3 "key positions," starting with Treasurer. That job can be hard to fill, since many sisters are afraid of it. The third person on our list has been Corresponding Secretary and Guard. She has served on the Finance Committee and works in a bank, so we know she would be a great fit for the Treasurer's role. Also, she appears to be a good future President and this job will help prepare her.

(Advance)

We can't ask the next person on the list to be Recording Secretary, since she's just finishing up her term in that position, so we'll need to find a different job for her. Let's ask her to be Corresponding Secretary, since she could benefit from that job.

(Advance)

Sister 5, who is currently chairing a State Committee, has great potential, so let's give her a "key job." We see that Recording Secretary is one of the jobs she needs, so let's plug her into that spot.

(Advance)

The Chaplain and Guard positions are easy to fill, so that should be done last. Let's ask Sister 6, who has previously been too busy with work to hold office, to be Chaplain, and Sister 7, who has been a member for two years, to be Guard.

(Advance 2 times till all filled in)

We've now completed our "draft slate." The Chair brings the slate to the Nominating Committee meeting, where the members either agree with it or make changes. Then, they create a "fallback list" – the longer the better. This is what they will turn to if their first choice for any of these positions says "no."

Advance to slide 7 - Developing a Fallback list

Continuing with our hypothetical example and using the same charts, let's create a fallback list, starting with President. We're confident our current Vice President (Sister 1) will accept the role, but just in case, who will we ask 2nd? And 3rd? Sister 2 is sufficiently qualified, so let's list her as our 2nd choice. With two Officer positions and her work on Finance, Sister 3 appears to be our next best option. We'll list those sisters in the Primary and Fallback column on the right.

(Advance)

For Vice President (and, therefore, the next President), the 2nd choice should be Sister 3, with her two offices and Finance Committee work. 3rd choice might be Sister 4, who has only served as Recording Secretary so far, but is very capable.

(Advance)

Sister 4 might also be a good 2nd choice for Treasurer, since she had a former career in finance. The 3rd choice might be Sister 5, who we want to put into a "key position," followed by Sister 6, who keeps books for her family business.

(Advance)

We'll continue to fill in the chart, using the same methodology.

(Advance 4 times till all filled in)

After the Nominating Committee meeting, the actual calling of prospective Officers begins.

Advance to slide 8 - Calling Potential Officers

Only one person should make the calls. She explains the job and talks about the work, the time involved, the length of the term, and the training to be received. She clarifies that the potential Officer's position won't be officially hers till after the election in February and the installation in March.

She starts by phoning the potential President. She must get a commitment from someone to serve in that role, before moving on to the next office. If the first choice for each office does not agree, the caller turns to the "fallback list." If a fallback accepts the job, but was already listed on the slate in a different Officer position, the whole slate may have to be modified. Hopefully, a good job has been done of matching Officers with jobs, and each one will accept the position offered. The caller keeps good records, especially as to the reason a member offers for declining an office.

Advance to slide 9 - Final Officers' Slate

Once all calls are completed, the slate is finalized, reflecting any changes made as a result of the phone calls. Also, the last column is updated. For example, since Sister 2 is about to be installed as Vice President, that position has been removed from her "helpful for the future" job list.

If you're going to start a Shadow Officer Program, a chart like this will be a great starting point. Even if you're not, it will still be very useful to next year's Nominating Committee.

Switching gears, the Nominating Committee is also responsible for finding Delegates and Alternates for State Convention, so I'll now touch briefly on that process.

Advance to slide 10 - Finding Convention Delegates and Alternates

Before the committee meets, as part of the advance preparation, one of the committee members compiles a list of all chapter members who have not yet been to State Convention. In our chapter, we like to send members in order of P.E.O. "seniority." In other words, the member who has been a P.E.O. the longest and has never been to convention is at the top of the list, and the newest member is at the bottom. If it's your

chapter's policy to send each new president to convention, her name goes at the top, regardless of her seniority. Once the list is prepared, it can simply be updated annually to remove from the list those who went to convention the previous year and to add new members. The list is brought to the meeting and the committee decides on the calling order, if NOT based on seniority.

Once the list is completed, one person should do the calling. Each person called is told the dates of convention, the location, and her responsibilities, such as attending all convention functions and reporting to the chapter afterwards, and perhaps paying for her own room, if she prefers not to room with the other Delegate. It's best to wait till each person has been reached before the next on the list is called. The first two sisters to accept the invitation will be Delegates. The next two will be Alternates.

Once the Officer slate is filled with willing candidates and Convention Delegates and Alternates are lined up, the Chair writes a report on behalf of the Nominating Committee. After it's approved by the rest of the committee, the report is given to the President for her records. The more information that is included, the better, especially feedback received from those called. For example, someone may say "I don't ever want to be president," or "I can't do computer work," or "I'm gone all winter, but I would be willing to job share." And potential convention attendees may say "I have no interest in going" or "I can't go this year but would love to go next time." That type of information could be very useful to future Nominating Committees.

Once the report is submitted, the Committee's job is normally done. If, on the other hand, you have decided to implement a Shadow Officer Program, this is a perfect time to start.

Advance to slide 11 - What a Shadow Officer Program Can Do

The use of a Shadow Officer Program can yield great results. No longer will it be a problem to fill the President's position. Someone is much more likely to accept the job when she knows it won't start for a year or two – after she's had time to shadow the serving President and learn all she can about the job. Since she knows she'll be fully prepared, the role won't seem so intimidating, and she won't be afraid to say "yes." Other slots will be easier to fill, as well. Members will commit more readily to an office, if it's a year or two downstream, and they know they will get training in the meantime. All Officers will be much more efficient and productive, since they'll be prepared and will feel relatively comfortable when they're installed in their new role. A planned succession will help ensure a bright future for the chapter. After the program has been up and running for a couple of years, the Nominating Committee will know who the president will be for the next three terms, maybe more. The chapter won't know who those individuals are, but they will know that a succession plan is in place, which should give all members some peace of mind. Those future presidents will benefit, too, from having a long time to prepare for office.

The task of finding Shadows is similar to the method used for selecting Officer candidates. Once again, it's a big time-saver if the Chair works ahead to prepare a draft slate.

Let's go through the process and develop a slate of "Shadows" for our hypothetical chapter. Again, we'll assume that the chapter's policy is to have Vice Presidents "move up" to the Presidency and that we want to place potential Presidents in as many of the "key roles" as possible before they are VPs. We know that not every Officer will want to become President, but we want to give each one the opportunity to be prepared, just in case. After serving in several offices, she may decide she can handle the Presidency, after all.

We'll start by considering the list of chapter members we previously developed – the 10 whom we felt had the best qualifications and availability to serve as Officers. We can also review the names of members who were not on that list, as well as members on the "not now, maybe later" list who might be available to shadow now, then serve as an officer in a year or two. Newer members who have impressed the committee with their eagerness to "jump right in," might be considered, as well. (Whereas we wouldn't ask a brand-

new member to serve as an Officer, we could ask her to be a Shadow.) We can add any of those names to our list.

The committee needs to find seven Shadows, one for each Officer role. Besides the President, who won't be shadowing anyone, we have six newly-selected Officers. We could give a Shadow role to each of those and fill the one remaining position with someone from the list of other potentials, or we might feel that there are several sisters who are not currently Officers who should be asked to shadow instead.

Advance to slide 12 - Filling in the Shadow Officer Slate

On the left is our list of potential Shadows, in the order we would like to see them placed.

Just as we did with Officers, we'll look at the positions each has already held and think about which jobs would best prepare her to become a well-trained president.

Starting at the top, the person with the most job experience is penciled in as Shadow President. She also happens to be the newly-selected VP, so she is already expecting to be the next President.

(Advance)

The person with the second best "resumé" is selected as Shadow Vice President.

She is well-qualified, is about to become Treasurer, and has served as Corresponding Secretary and Guard.

(Advance)

Sister 4 is about to become Corresponding Secretary and has already served as Recording Secretary, so the logical next step is to ask her to shadow the Treasurer's position. However, we've just learned that she doesn't want to serve as Treasurer in the near future. So, let's put Sister 5 in that job

(Advance)

and ask Sister 4 to be Shadow Chaplain. Even without the Treasurer's job, she's sufficiently prepared, and we can consider her next time for the VP role.

(Advance)

We would like to put Sister 6 and Sister 7 in Shadow roles but both have indicated that, after their current terms are up, they would like a break for a couple of years because of family circumstances. So, let's ask Sister 8 to be Shadow Recording Secretary and highly-motivated new member Sister 9 to shadow the Corresponding Secretary.

(Advance)

(Advance)

Finally, let's ask new member Sister 10 to serve as Shadow Guard.

(Advance till all filled in)

The remaining potential Shadows are put on a "fallback list," to ask if we get "turn-downs."

The draft Shadow Officer's slate is now complete. Four of the potential Shadows are newly-selected Officers. One has been a member for several years but previously unable to serve because of her young children. Two have been members less than a year and letting them shadow will be a great way of easing them into the Officers' ranks.

If, in your chapter, the Vice President does NOT move up to the President's role, it will be a little harder to use the Shadow Program. You may not be able to plan as far into the future, since you may not know in advance who your next President will be. You should select as the President's Shadow the person whom you feel is most qualified to serve next term, no matter what her current role is. She may be an Officer or someone who has held offices in the past and is taking a break. She may have previously declined serving as President, but perhaps if you offer her a year or two of training as the President's Shadow first, she just might accept.

Advance to slide 13 - What to Tell Potential Shadows

When calling the potential Shadows, once again, one person should do all the calls, starting with the potential Shadow President and working her way down the slate. During the phone calls, the concept of shadowing is explained and several points are covered. Shadowing won't interfere with a Shadow's current job, since little time is required. The Officer she shadows will be told her identity, but no one else will know it except the Nominating Committee and the President. She is to keep her identity quiet until the time that she is elected for that office. The reason for not making the information public is simple. When the Shadow operates anonymously in the background, there's no pressure on her. There's no confusion on the part of the chapter members as to who's actually serving, and the focus remains – as it should – on the current Officer. In chapter meetings, a Shadow should observe the Officer she's shadowing and, after the meeting, ask any questions she might have. She may start shadowing whenever she wishes and continue until she is installed as the Officer in that position. Those shadowing the President, Treasurer, and Corresponding Secretary should look over their Officers' shoulders as Annual Reports are prepared. All may rest assured that the Nominating Committee will keep in touch throughout their term.

Filling the Shadow slate can be surprisingly easy. When we implemented the program in my chapter, six members of our draft slate instantly agreed to be Shadows. The only holdout was our pick for Shadow President. Since she was not currently the Vice President, the invitation “came out of the blue.” She needed a couple of days to get over the shock of being asked, but then she agreed, as well.

After the Shadows are all lined up, the Nominating Committee keeps in touch. An email is sent to each Shadow, confirming in writing the points discussed during the previous phone call. She is connected with her Officer counterpart. Officers are encouraged to mentor their Shadows and to explain what they do (including work done outside of meetings), share any paperwork, and provide training. Both Shadows and Officers are contacted throughout the year, provided with sources of information for each Officer position, in P.E.O. newsletters and websites and reminded to stay in close contact.

When the Shadows' terms are up, they are again contacted and asked to confirm that they are still willing to take on the Officer roles for which they have been training. At the same time, they are asked to take on new Shadow roles for the next term.

Now, let's look out into the future. Thanks to the Shadow Program, in chapter, we know who our Presidents will be through 2030. In addition, we already have our eyes on the sisters we hope will be leading our chapter through 2034, and we're making sure they're getting the Officer experience they need. We feel the leadership of our chapter is in great shape for years to come.

Let's see if we can figure out who the next few Presidents might be for our hypothetical chapter.

Advance to slide 14 - Planning for Presidential Succession

Again, we'll use our original list of ten women with good potential. For each, we've considered her new position, past positions, and additional jobs which would be useful for her. Based on that information, we've filled in the last column with what we think should be her next and her subsequent jobs. Sister 1, the newly-selected President, is not shown, but we know she will be serving till spring of 2027. Sister 2 is the new Vice President and is shadowing the President, so she'll be president herself from 2027-29. Sister 3 is shadowing the Vice President. She'll be the next VP and will shadow the President at the same time, then be President from 2029-31. By accepting those Shadow positions, Sisters 2 and 3 know they're going to be President and they know exactly when. Sisters 4 and 5 appear to be the next in line, potentially serving in 2031-33 and 2033-35. Sister 9 is a possibility, as well, for 2035-37.

Advance to slide 15 - Future Presidents

Here's the tentative list of our hypothetical chapter's future Presidents. The latter three sisters don't yet know about our high hopes for them. At some point downstream, they can be approached about the

possibility of shadowing the Vice President (and told the steps that follow, leading to the presidency). If they're not willing, we can turn to the remaining sisters on our list of potentials or start grooming others in the chapter.

In any event, our job is done for now. We can share with the chapter that we have Presidents definitely lined up through 2031, and we can celebrate!

Advance to slide 16 - The End

I've now covered the processes for filling Officer, Convention Delegate, and Shadow slots used by the Nominating Committee in my chapter. Together, you and I have followed the same procedures in filling in those slates for a hypothetical chapter. I hope this exercise has been helpful and provided you with information that will be useful for your chapter. I also hope you'll consider implementing a Shadow Officer Program. It is working very well for my chapter, and it can work for yours, too! If I can be of any assistance in the future, please let me know.

(Montana State Convention, June 6, 2025)
