

The Four P's of Successful Meetings

Materials needed: Peas in a Pod; Robert Rules of Order; P.E.O. Constitution;
GA Bylaws and Standing Rules; Sweet Pea seed packets

How many of you have ever been in meetings that seemed to last forever? How about those meetings where nothing is accomplished? How about when you arrive and the person in charge is totally unprepared? Maybe you dread going to those meetings where one individual tends to monopolize the discussion. Or, my least favorite meeting is the one where you spend many hours but leave not knowing if any decisions were made.

Of course, none of these meetings were P.E.O. meetings, I am sure. During my years in business and volunteer work, I have attended all of these types of meeting. Successful meetings all have four major elements. I call them the Four P's. (Bring out the Pea Pod with the four Peas) The four P's are Purpose, Process, Participation, and Performance.

While these are true for all meetings, I want to discuss how they specifically relate to P.E.O. meetings. First, let's discuss **Purpose. (Pull Out a Pea)**

If I were to address the purpose of P.E.O., I would target two elements: Sisterhood (as defined by our Objects and Aims) and Projects (both contributions to the projects and shepherding recipients).

What is the purpose of our Chapter meetings – conduct business of chapter, make decisions, allow bills, grow sisterhood, enjoy camaraderie

Likewise, local chapters have Committees that are defined with specific purposes. These committees should function to investigate specific subjects, develop detail plans, make recommendations to chapter related to that function/purpose.

This Convention is a meeting; what is its purpose– inform chapter membership, provide leadership, conduct business, maintain enthusiasm/growth of sisterhood, connect the projects to our membership, make decisions that affect all chapters in state

Workshops – informal and informative sessions; to train and relay knowledge in a more informal manner to allow for questions.

Now, let's discuss how the meetings are managed. Most effective meetings have Agendas that are published and attendees are prepared for the subject matter.

The Seven Founders and subsequent leaders were very wise in how they set up the Local Chapter meetings.

The Process (Pull out a Pea) is well defined and provided in the President's book. This Order of Business is not a secret; anyone in your chapter can ask to borrow the president's book to review and learn the business meeting. By following the structure of a P.E.O. chapter meeting agenda, our meetings should typically last only 45 minutes. I want you to keep in mind that the meeting structure is clear and is meant to bring comfort and unity. Any chapter meeting that you attend across the world should have the same order of business or Process. Even though local chapter meetings are structured and formal, we must also be gracious and supportive if one of the 'processes' gets out of order or someone makes a mistake. There should not ever be such rigidity that a chapter meeting is not fun!!!

I have found P.E.O. meetings to be very efficient and productive. One of the key reasons is a somewhat unique feature of local chapter meetings: the President is in charge and all discussion is addressed to her. For that reason, a member stands, addresses the president as "Madam President", waits to be recognized and then the sister gives her report, makes her comment or ask a question. In writing, this method sounds very stilted and confining. Yet, I have found that this process limits side conversations (which are usually unproductive), prevents one sister from monopolizing the conversation, results in more succinct points and creates an environment where everyone can speak up (even those shy sisters who may be more reluctant.)

There are also some specifics the local chapter Order of Business that I would like to point out.

- Opening – Start on time, Routine practices – Password, Opening Ode, Objects & Aims, Roll Call, Devotion
- Minutes – Minutes should be precise and reflect actions taken following the "Suggestions For Minutes"
- Committee Reports – During Reports of Committees, the committee chair, or designated member, makes a report regarding the work of their committee. There is no discussion conducted at this time. All motions and discussions are held until Miscellaneous Business. While not every committee reports at each meeting, Project Committee Reports should be routine. – They are one of our major Purposes – and should be given at each and every business meetings. These reports can be taken from The RECORD, from the state or international websites, excerpts from programs or project brochures. The types of information that can be conveyed include project deadlines dates, review of project criteria; call for suggestions of project recipients, reports on status of recipients, project student highlights and/or any other number of reports
- Monthly Reports of Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer – These reports should be prepared in advanced, read and then handed to the Recording Secretary.
- Correspondence – The Secretary should have read the correspondence prior to the meeting so that she is familiar with it. For efficiency, the correspondence should be out of the envelopes and organized in the following order: International Correspondence, State

Correspondence, Local Correspondence. As another example of the efficiency of our meetings, the Corresponding Secretary should read any acceptance of dimit last, as then the President will state, "According to our P.E.O. Constitution, the reading of this dimit constitutes its acceptance and Jane Doe is now a member of Chapter XYZ.

- **Miscellaneous Business** – Any business that was discussed at prior meetings can be addressed during Unfinished Business. These may be items where the chapter needed more time to investigate or decide OR items that require more than one meeting such as 'Consent to Select a Charter' or changes to 'Chapter Bylaws'. New Business includes those items that were brought before the meeting during Correspondence and/or committee reports.

- o Business is brought before a local chapter should be in the form of a motion. The motion should occur first, with a second, and then the discussion afterward. If the discussion is unproductive or too long, it can be referred to a standing committee or a special appointed committee. Once the committee has met and investigated the subject and alternatives, the committee reports it under reports and then make the appropriate motion. During the discussion, they can provide any details that are brought up. After the discussion is complete, the President will take the vote. The order of business (or by-laws) clearly defines what type of vote is necessary for each type of motion. A written ballot can also be used for any issue that is controversial.

- **Bills Allowed** – All bills can be provided to the treasurer prior to the meeting, she can move they are all allowed and a vote taken.

- **Presentation of Names & Balloting** – The President should know prior to the meeting if a name is going to be presented or if balloting is taking place. These two processes can be very efficient if members are prepared and ready to participate.

- **Suggestions for the good of the Chapter** – Items covered in this period are primarily about information that relates to the entire chapter. If your meetings are too long, you may wish to consider how to address this agenda item. Some suggestions include using a hour glass timer from a game board to limit the time sisters talk, to close the meeting and then pass a basket where each sister who wishes to speak puts in \$1 (or more),

Resources that are available to all chapters as required Supplies include: (have these available to hold up)

- Roberts Rules of Order
- P.E.O. Constitution – Three sections
- Georgia State Bylaws and Standing Rules -

With all meetings, they can only be effective if there is **Participation, (take out a Pea)** our third P.

Participation in meetings is often dictated by the type of meetings and established Ground Rules. Think again about meetings other than P.E.O. meetings. Some traditional examples include

- Business meetings / Board meetings – Specific seating; leader at the head of the table. Based on the leadership style, the participation is either encouraged or discouraged. Maybe there are even certain people or functions who are expected to participate and others are not.
- Facilitated meetings often create their own rules at the start of a meeting but they have some established themes – One Conversation at a time; Start on Time; Everyone participates; Respect each other; Everyone is equal; Share Responsibility; 5-minute rule; Respect differences; Share Air Time, the list goes on and on....
- P.E.O. - As we said before, there is a formality to the participation, the President is in charge of the meeting.
- Stand to speak, Wait to be recognized, Begin with 'Madam President' and then make your report, statement, discussion etc.
- Project Reports should be given at each meeting
- During Miscellaneous business, discussion is important; it is okay to disagree. It is even okay to vote 'con' when you disagree. As sisters, we can respect each others' differences and yet yield our own preference to support the decision made by the chapter.
- P.E.O.s try to say yes when asked to serve. Your service is an opportunity to stretch yourself for growth and development
- Likewise, there may be sisters who are not participating as much as they used to. Look for opportunities for ways that they can use their gifts to participate. It may be that they are honored when asked.

The last P is for **Performance, (pull out a pea)**. Only you and your chapter sisters can answer how well your chapter is doing. Ask yourselves these questions:

- Are we donating to the projects?
- Have we found potential recipients and submitted their paperwork appropriately?
- Have we reached out to sisters we haven't seen recently?
- Have we initiated new sisters?
- Do we express a loving concern for each sister?
- Have we served our chapter/ state when asked?

- Is Participation dropping? Family meeting?
- Are we large enough to 'birth' a new chapter?

No Chapter is perfect but if you can have effective meetings by focusing on the four peas, you may find that you are not only belonging to P.E.O., you will have also become a P.E.O. sister.

Questions? Ideas? Comments?

Note: Bring several packages of sweet peas seeds and pass/throw out as people participate.