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# Alpha Phi Omega

National Service Fraternity

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## GROWING PAINS

*Making the Transition  
To a Larger Chapter*

FALL 2000

## INTRODUCTION

Your chapter is riding high! It has never in its history seen a period of such growth as it has in the past two semesters. Alpha Phi Omega is becoming more recognized on campus and enthusiasm is high. Other chapters now look at your growing chapter with a mix of envy and admiration. Things couldn't be better, right? Well, maybe not. You begin to notice little things - older actives leaving saying the chapter "just isn't the same anymore", newly initiated pledges not returning to enjoy their status as actives, several Brothers mentioning they feel unneeded, and more than a few people complaining about the lack of organization of the group.

Many chapters have faced similar situations. Just because a chapter experiences sudden growth does not mean that the larger numbers will be maintained. In fact, if the chapter doesn't go through a few "growing pains", it can rest assured that the number of members will fall again, usually within the next several semesters. Sustained growth rarely - if ever - happens. To maintain growth, the group must change to accommodate more members. Change isn't always easy or fun, but it is an active choice that any group, not just Alpha Phi Omega chapters, can make. Chapters may decide that they really don't like being larger and, therefore, will welcome a return to smaller numbers. That is a valid decision to make, provided that the chapter does not shrink to fewer than fifteen actives! However, if a chapter finds within its increased numbers newfound strength, it must then make a conscious decision to maintain that growth. In this situation, not to decide really is to decide to go back to the way things were. Therefore, it is important for the chapter to evaluate the change and the impact it has had on the chapter's programs.

This guide gives some suggestions for those chapters that have decided to maintain growth in their membership. As with any suggestion, take what will work, adapt what you can, and discard the rest.

Three main premises provide the foundation for the following pages. They are:

1. The larger the group, the more structure and organization needed.
2. The larger the group, the more an individual can feel unneeded.
3. Consistently large groups (APO and otherwise) have structures in place which help them maintain their size.

This guide will focus on four areas a growing chapter must examine to maintain growth.

Chapter I : Communication

This section covers how to expand your communication channels both during and outside of meetings. It will also address keeping in touch with alumni.

Chapter II : Distributing the Workload

This section discusses officer structure, how to use committees, and how to keep up with all those pledges.

Chapter III : Making Everyone Feel Included

This section addresses different programs and methods to keep your membership happy. Special recognitions, big brother/little brother programs, and conventions are just a few of the ideas you can use to make everyone feel important.

Chapter IV : Chapter Meetings

Meetings are a lot different for a large group than for a small one. Organization of meetings, use of an executive committee, and incorporating a more formal structure are several ways of staying organized and on track.

As you read **GROWING PAINS**, you will notice quite a bit of overlap among subjects. References to other sections are made where appropriate. It is the National Membership and Extension Committee's hope that you will find **GROWING PAINS - Making the Transition to a Larger Chapter** a useful tool. Thank you for caring enough about Alpha Phi Omega to invest your time and energy into improving your chapter.



## CHAPTER I: COMMUNICATION

Remember the game “telephone”? One person started out with a statement, whispered it to another, who whispered it to the next person, and so on, until the message reached the end of the line. When the last person stated the message to the whole group, it was both hilarious and amazing to see how the original message had been convoluted! Did you ever notice that the more people who played, the more the end message was unlike the original statement? It’s an early lesson on the nature of communication. The more channels a message must go through, the more likely the message is to change from its original intent.

Growing organizations need to be aware that communication will be more difficult as more people are added to the “phone line”. This section will discuss a variety of ways by which a chapter can effectively communicate items of importance to its members. However, good communication does not happen in a vacuum. A newspaper doesn’t communicate very well if no one reads it. The entire chapter must understand what channels they have open to them to receive information. The chapter has the responsibility to provide access to information, but as the chapter grows, individuals have increasing responsibility to access that information.

No one wants to sit in a meeting forever. How many times has an inactive Brother cited boring meetings as the reason for no longer being active? Although the meetings probably aren’t the only reason for a member not returning, they are often the only time an individual receives information about the happenings of the group. If meetings drag on too long or are disorganized, feelings of frustration may contribute to already existing doubts about the group. Although **Chapter IV: Chapter Meetings** will cover the organization of meetings, there are some things you can do to encourage better communication of events and projects during meetings.

**First**, create a calendar of upcoming events. This calendar may be posted on a wall of the room or written on a blackboard. An even more effective tool is to distribute a weekly handout listing upcoming events. This provides members with a list of current activities. Be aware, however, that a printed weekly calendar will have to be coordinated to include all projects, social events, committee meetings, etc. It is best not to inundate your members with a separate handout for each event, never mind the environmental impact.

**Second**, make sure chapter meetings are held in rooms set up for good communication. Everyone should be easily seen and heard. Also, make sure there is enough room for everyone to be comfortable, yet not so many empty seats as to make it feel as if no one else is at the meeting.

**Third**, a posted agenda of the meeting can be helpful in emphasizing the major events of the upcoming week, and an agenda may double for a wall calendar as well.

**Lastly**, following Robert's Rules of Order or some other agreed upon procedure can ensure that everyone has a chance to talk and be heard on any issue. (More information on agendas and Robert's Rules can be found in **Chapter IV**.)

Although chapter meetings are a primary source of information, as a chapter expands alternative methods of communication become essential. Members who cannot attend a meeting need to know what is going on as well. There are several effective methods to accomplish this. A phone committee is the quickest way to distribute information, although reaching everyone by phone becomes more difficult as a chapter gets larger. A phone committee with each member in charge of calling 10-15 members is probably better than a phone tree (remember the "phone game"). A chapter newsletter is probably the most helpful communication device for those who cannot attend meetings on a regular basis. A newsletter may include officer reports, a calendar of events, and fun stuff (birthdays, quotes, etc.).

An on-campus office can serve as an APO gathering place between meetings. This can be a place to post announcements, project sign-in lists, minutes of the last meeting, and for officer mail boxes. Provide incentives for members to visit the office such as posting a pledge sign-in sheet (1-3 times a week) there and using the office as a meeting place for projects or extracurricular activities. Perhaps your growth can be a bargaining chip in negotiating for office space. Doing responsible projects for the school also will encourage campus administrators to help you out. If office space is not a possibility, perhaps you can find a bulletin board to claim as your own for posting upcoming events and minutes.

Another opportunity at your disposal is the school newspaper. Many newspapers will allow campus organizations to list meeting times free of charge. Try to get project dates and times listed also. Announcements in the paper also double as advertisements for the chapter.

Some chapters have invested in telephone answering machines. Such machines can be used to announce upcoming events to callers. The answering machine can be connected to the chapter's own phone or an officer's phone.

If your members have access to an electronic bulletin board, use that to post calendars and announcements.

Whatever communication tools you use, make sure you include all members of your chapter: pledge, active, associate, inactive and advisory. Communication makes people feel wanted, nurtures important resources and encourages people to get involved. Advisors often would like to be more active but are simply overlooked. Make sure they know what is going on with the chapter and feel invited to participate.

If your chapter has a Big Brother/Little Brother program, encourage this relationship to continue after pledging ends. Big Brothers should be expected to call their Little Brothers (especially if they haven't been seen lately) to keep them informed and to encourage their involvement in chapter activities. Little Brothers should be expected to do the same for their Big Brothers. (See **Chapter III** for more on Big Brother programs.)

Alumni are interested in keeping track of friends and up-to-date on chapter events. Alumni are important resources for a chapter, serving as advisors or supporting the chapter financially. Inherent in keeping touch with alumni is having a good alumni roster. Consider using the office of alumni secretary for this purpose (for more information on this office, consult the **LEADERSHIP SERIES: ALUMNI SECRETARY** guide). An alumni newsletter is an excellent way of keeping in touch with your alumni. This newsletter would be quite different from the chapter newsletter. While alumni want some information about the current chapter (list of current officers, major projects, parties, banquets) they are most interested in information about marriages, births, job changes, and addresses of friends from college days. If the chapter would like to have alumni reunions that coincide with major chapter events, the newsletter idea is a great way to offer the invitation.

Good communication takes a concerted effort on everybody's part. It also needs to be a two-way street - from officers to chapter members and vice versa. Listening is always a better communication tool than talking. Listen to your Brothers as they express their goals, needs and frustrations, then use the tools listed above (or others you may already have in place) to communicate back to them your understanding of the same. Lastly, make sure everyone is included in and aware of the various communication channels your chapter uses. Although maintaining contact with each member become more difficult as your size increases, it is possible. To be successful, however, both the chapter and the individual member must use the channels available to them.



## CHAPTER I: SUMMARY OF IDEAS

1. Create a calendar of events
2. Set up the chapter meeting room for good communication
3. Post an agenda for each meeting
4. Follow an agreed upon procedure during meetings
5. Create a chapter newsletter
6. Find a chapter office or gathering place
7. Use campus news media to announce events
8. Create an alumni newsletter



## CHAPTER II: DISTRIBUTING THE WORKLOAD

**BURNOUT:** a dreaded disease that afflicts good-hearted people who either try to do everything themselves or who are forced to do everything themselves. **PRESCRIPTION:** a large dose of distributing the workload to a variety of people. **SIDE EFFECT:** more people involved in the chapter which makes them feel needed and more opportunities for leadership development within the chapter.

A chapter that has grown in size must also grow in programs to accommodate the influx of members. If the chapter does not adjust its leadership structure to spread the load, chapter officers will become burned out and programs will suffer. Another reason to include more people in the process is that, as members become involved in the decision making aspects of a chapter, they begin to feel ownership of the chapter. When they feel ownership, they are more likely to work harder for the chapter's success.

One way to distribute the workload is to increase the number of officers and/or committee chairs you have. With growth, the chapter should be reaching a point where there is little or no need for one person to hold several positions. Do you have special service projects that you do each year or semester (i.e. - blood drive, dance-a-thon, ushering or campus elections)? If so, try assigning these projects to different people who then report to the service vice president. Another possibility is to split the service branch into several areas, with project directors for each. Examples of this may include community projects, scouting projects, campus projects, and fund-raising projects. If you do add additional officers, create a hierarchy of reporting so that only a few people, vice presidents for example, report directly to the president.

Two important points must be emphasized here. First, realize that the larger a chapter becomes, the more unwieldy officer elections become. Consider electing only the major officers and letting them appoint the others. The appointment process can be done by applications and/or interviews. Second, if you wish to change the leadership structure of your chapter, make sure you make the appropriate bylaw changes. Not every officer needs to be listed in the bylaws, but you may need to update them as your chapter changes.

Another way to spread the work around is to make good use of committees. Committee service is a great way to incorporate new actives into the life of the chapter. With growth, an office that once was easy to handle may now be overloaded. A committee can help break the work into smaller portions that are easier to complete.

Committees fall into one of two categories. Standing (or permanent) committees are needed every semester. Possible standing committees include the newsletter committee, service committee (made up of all officers who deal with service projects), fellowship committee, and telephone committee. Other committees are temporary. They have set beginning and ending dates and are charged with specific purposes.

Convention organizing committees, bylaw revision committees, and anniversary committees are examples of temporary committees.

Some committees will meet irregularly, but most will need to meet on a weekly or biweekly basis. It is helpful for the committee to follow a meeting schedule that allows the committee chair to have an up-to-date report for each executive committee meeting.

Choosing committee members can be accomplished in a variety of ways. One option is simply to accept all members who are interested in serving on a particular committee. Another alternative is to have those who are interested fill out applications and have the chair choose from the applicants. Another option is for the chair to recruit members who would be of most help and who would benefit most from serving on the committee. This approach has to be handled carefully, however, as members who are not recruited could end up feeling very alienated. Whatever method you select, be sure to guard against winding up with too many people on some committees and not enough on others. Also make sure that every member of the chapter has the opportunity to serve in some capacity.

Another area that is affected directly by growth is the education of pledges. In many ways, the pledge program is where the chapter's future is decided. Since the pledge program is the first impression a pledge has of Alpha Phi Omega, the experience may very well determine the pledge's level of activity in the semesters to come. A disorganized or impersonal pledge program can create a bad first impression for a pledge. The more pledges a chapter has, the more difficult it is to keep up with them, their requirements, and their service hours.

It may be necessary to split the duties of the pledge trainer/educator. This may be done by assigning several assistants or a committee to the pledge trainer. By doing this, the pledge class can be broken into small groups of 6-10 members, with committee members as group leaders. Use these smaller groups to get to know pledges better, as well as to discuss problems, unfinished pledge requirements, upcoming events, and traditions. It may also be beneficial to have one active member serve as a "counselor" to the pledges. While the pledge training committee takes care of the education and requirement aspects of the pledging process, this counselor (could be called a guide, old man/woman, pledge motivator, etc.) would focus on instilling the spirit of our cardinal principles and working with the pledge officers. Another way to take the burden off the pledge trainer is to use the big brother/little brother program more. Big brothers can be encouraged to be more responsible for their little brother's completion of the requirements (more about big brother/little brother programs in **Chapter III**).

Good organization of the actual pledge meetings is a key to maintaining and retaining a large number of pledges. At the first rush meeting, have the pledge requirements already set in stone and available for the prospective members. They have a right to know before they begin the pledging process what will be expected of them. Before the first pledge meeting, plan what you will teach and cover in each meeting of the semester (including any appropriate quizzes and tests). Also, make presentation of material fun! If you have a pledge training committee, involve them in skits or games that liven

up the material. Another thought is to bring chapter officers in to discuss their roles and what Alpha Phi Omega does on your campus. Since it is more difficult to keep up with completed requirements with larger pledge classes, consider some sort of accounting procedure for pledges and requirements. One possibility is to have a notebook with a checklist that each pledge is responsible for updating weekly. Another idea is to give pledges a checklist to update regularly and turn in at the end of the pledge period. (These must be reviewed by the pledge trainer/educator to monitor progress and spot any problems while they can still be solved).

Pledges themselves can do a lot of work if allowed. Allowing them to elect pledge class officers and run their own meetings (after the education portion is done, of course) not only promotes leadership, but takes some responsibility off the shoulders of the pledge trainer.

Distributing the workload among many members reduces chances of burnout. Also, the more members participate in the planning of the chapter's programs, the more they will feel needed and, therefore, the more they will stay involved. Many officers find it difficult to give up control of a project or job that they know they can do well. It is extremely important for those who do not want to delegate to understand that delegation keeps them from burning out and allows more members to develop leadership skills - which is essential for the long-term success of the chapter. Further, delegation of responsibility will enhance their effectiveness as officers/chairs because their officer/program will no longer be limited to the time and energy of any one person.



## CHAPTER II: SUMMARY

1. Share leadership - create more officers/committees
2. Make better use of committees
3. Involve all of your members in committees
4. Organize your pledge program



### CHAPTER III: MAKING EVERYONE FEEL INCLUDED

In a growing organization, many members are likely to feel unneeded and unwanted. People don't usually remain in a relationship if they do not feel they are needed. Remember that everyone who joins Alpha Phi Omega does so because they have certain needs that they hope APO can fill. Although these needs differ from one Brother to another, if they are not met, members will seek fulfillment elsewhere. One of the basic needs of any individual is to feel loved and needed. As your chapter grows, a conscious effort must be made to ensure that everyone feels included.

As mentioned previously, committees are an excellent way to get people involved, especially newer members. Committees provide an opportunity for members to contribute to the decision-making and planning processes of the chapter and to hone leadership skills. With new actives, service on a committee continues the habit of time commitment to the chapter that was started as a pledge. For many, if the habit of coming to meetings (be it chapter, committee, or other) is broken, it is difficult to re-establish.

For people to feel needed, their work and worth must be recognized. It's important to recognize everybody in the chapter at some point during the semester. This recognition can be for birthdays, completing service requirements, lending help above and beyond the call of duty, accomplishments outside of Alpha Phi Omega, etc. While cards and notes are always appropriate, make a point to congratulate or recognize people publicly, during a chapter meeting. This way the recognition is extended to others in the meeting.

Planning and evaluation take on a larger role in chapter activities when you increase size. It just takes more effort to organize the chapter and get everything needed (people & resources) to the activity site on time. The planning process within the chapter should involve as many of the members as possible. This will provide another means for them to feel needed and for their opinions to be heard. Evaluation is an essential aspect of planning. There must be a review of past activities before you can decide which are worth repeating.

Without planning and evaluation, larger chapters tend to repeat projects and activities simply because "that's what we've always done". Inevitably, a large percentage of the membership becomes disheartened and uninterested and feel they no longer have a stake in the chapter's activities. Officers and project chairs become frustrated (and burn out) because "no one is interested or cares".

The Fraternity has developed a "Chapter Program Planning Conference" (CPPC) which provides a framework for a chapter's members to evaluate its program and to plan for the next semester or year. It provides a forum for feedback and gives proposals for change an open hearing.

The chapter should schedule a CPPC far in advance, so that the entire membership can participate. If at all possible, this session should be held away from campus, so there are fewer distractions and members can't "come and go" during the day. (The CPPC Guide is available from the National Office.)

Involving members in this process will keep them actively involved in the chapter's program, reduce burnout and increase the feeling of fraternalism within the chapter.

A big brother/little brother program is also an excellent means of keeping people involved in the life of the chapter. This program entails pairing an active with a pledge to help the pledge through the requirements. As part of these requirements, insist that the big brother and little brother do projects together. To ensure that they get to know each other, they could be required to ask each other several questions each week. Whether required or not, encourage the big brother to take responsibility for the little brother (i.e. - making sure they have rides to chapter events, keeping up with their requirements, and introducing the pledge to active members). Do not assume, however, that just because a person is an active member that he/she knows exactly what a big brother should do. Put your expectations of big brothers in writing so that all actives will know what is expected of them.

The pairing of big and little brothers can sometimes be a painful process (especially as your chapter grows and there are more pairings to make). Several different approaches are possible. The correct one for your chapter will depend on your membership. One possibility is to have each pledge ask an active to be his/her big brother, although often pledges don't know enough actives to make a really good choice. Another method is to draw straws or names, hereby making the process random. This has the advantage of being fair to everybody but may create some bad combinations. Another option is to have the actives choose little brothers, although this too could be disastrous if a pledge doesn't get asked. An alternative is to allow both actives and pledges to list several people they would like to have as a big/little brother, then have a third party pair them, attempting to match preferences when possible. Any combination of the above methods may be most suitable for your chapter.

Once you have a big brother/little brother program firmly rooted, this relationship can be extended into families. Create extensive family trees showing the history of your family. Family trees provide an excellent opportunity to chart chapter history as well. Use the family concept as a way of creating smaller, closer-knit groups to do fun things with - dinners, movie nights, etc. Once families are established, encourage them to be responsible for making sure new actives feel welcome and wanted during their first active semester.

The chapter can create a "morale officer" (or smile committee, active motivation committee, sunshine committee) whose sole responsibility is to make people feel special by calling those who haven't been around in a while and sending or handing out birthday cards. A simple card can keep the lines of communication open.

Conventions and conferences also offer an incredible opportunity to grow closer to other chapter members as well as to other chapters. It's amazing how well you can get to know eight people crammed in a van on a road trip to a convention. Even better than that is the bond that is created when eleven people share the same room (and the single bathroom) during the course of a convention weekend! Seriously, camaraderie abounds at conventions, and the time spent sharing, learning, and playing with other Alpha Phi Omega Brothers is very conducive to creating close relationships among Brothers. This is especially true for pledges and new actives who still may not have found a niche in APO. While allowing members extensive time with their chapter Brothers, conventions also allow newer members a true glance at why Alpha Phi Omega is called a National Service Fraternity. Encourage all your members to attend conventions, especially pledges and new actives. Conventions rarely fail to cement friendships, spark personal growth, and inspire us to new goals.

Because of our nature and mission, most chapters do more service projects than anything else. One way to get people outside of the leadership structure of the chapter more involved with the service program is to allow non-service committee members to lead projects. Many chapters employ an MIC - Member In Charge (or PC - Project Chair or something similar). The MIC can be responsible for anything about the project, ranging from making reminder calls to arranging all of the details and supplies. Perhaps you can have a pledge MIC and an active MIC work together on larger projects. The point is that leadership in the service program need not be restricted to officers or the service committee. The more people who have a stake in the outcome of a project or event, the more they will feel needed and involved.

Small, medium, and large chapters alike share one major problem - cliques. Are cliques necessarily evil? In large chapters, cliques will develop naturally and are, in fact, important in keeping a large number of members coming back. Realize that small, tight groups of friends will exist and that they serve a purpose. The trick is to try to avoid cliques becoming so tight that they become hateful, competitive, and exclusive. One way to avoid this is to stress the Brotherhood aspects of Alpha Phi Omega. Although we naturally will have a few chapter members that we are especially close to, we are Brothers with every member in the chapter. Emphasis on this, starting as pledges, should help reduce the negative aspects of cliques.

Although people pledge Alpha Phi Omega for different reasons, they stay involved for two reasons. *They feel needed and they feel wanted.* As a chapter grows, it is much easier for people to fall between the cracks and feel out of place. It is every Brother's responsibility to make everyone feel wanted and needed. There are many valid reasons for members to choose to become inactive, but not feeling they are a part of the Brotherhood should NEVER be one.



### CHAPTER III: SUMMARY

1. Make your members feel wanted and needed
2. Utilize planning and evaluation sessions
3. Use a Big Brother/Little Brother program
4. Create a “Morale Officer”
5. Participate in Conferences and Conventions



## CHAPTER IV: CHAPTER MEETINGS

Chapter meetings are usually a key ingredient to a chapter's success. Although other variables are usually at work, many inactive members cite long or boring chapter meetings as their reason for not being around. Unfortunately, as a chapter grows, there is usually a great deal more information to communicate to the membership - more projects, more committee & officer reports, more announcements, more pats on the back, etc. No wonder meetings get so long! Chapter meetings may have to be longer than they used to be, but there are ways to avoid needless, marathon meetings. AND HEY...WHO EVER SAID THAT MEETINGS HAD TO BE DULL?? Yessirree Bob, your meetings can be concise and fun at the same time! How, you ask?

An efficient meeting is a planned meeting. The way in which the chapter president organizes the meeting is directly related to its length. The president should always have a detailed plan or agenda for each meeting. To speed things even more, publish the agenda for the rest of the membership by either placing a written outline of the meeting on the wall or handing out copies of the agenda. If the membership knows the order of reports or topics, they will know the appropriate time to ask specific questions or make appropriate comments. Also, if there are not too many, an agenda can be used to remind the chapter of times and dates of projects, parties, or other events. One chapter uses the bottom of its photocopied agenda for a survey or a trivia question each week. This provides an instant way for those members who know their stuff to be recognized by the chapter and is a forum for members to air their opinions on different matters facing the chapter without taking up meeting time. Here's an example of a possible agenda:

- Call to order
- Approve the minutes of the last meeting
- Officer reports
  - I. Service vice president
    - recap of last week's projects
    - this week's projects
    - future dates to keep in mind
  - II. Membership vice president
    - Pledge trainer
    - Fellowship
    - Newsletter info
  - III. Other
    - Treasurer
    - Secretary
    - Advisory Committee Chair
    - Convention report
  - IV. President

- V. Old Business
- VI. New Business
- VII. Announcements
- VIII. Adjournment
- IX. Toast Song

The proper use of the executive committee also can decrease the amount of time spent in chapter meetings. The purpose of an executive committee is to provide a forum for the chapter officers to discuss upcoming meetings, events, and problems. The executive committee also can make tentative decisions on various chapter issues. Once the executive committee meets, officers can relay information from the discussion to the rest of the membership before the next meeting so the membership is aware of any issues and the various sides to each. The nuts and bolts of the chapter's programs should be worked out in committee meetings and executive meetings. Avoid "micromanagement" at the chapter level.

As chapters grow, meeting time becomes more precious. For this reason more responsibility for relatively minor decisions should be left to the officer or committee in charge. It could be appropriate for the executive committee to review such decisions, but chapter meetings should not be used to vote on which type of dressing will be served with the salad at the chapter banquet! Because the decision-making roles of officers will increase as the chapter expands, executive committee meetings will need to be held at regular and frequent intervals (at least every other week if not every week). The meetings also will need to be a little more structured and more like chapter meetings (perhaps using Robert's Rules a little more). Further, as with chapter meetings, don't waste time. Follow a predetermined (by the president or presiding officer) agenda. Also, establish procedures for conducting business (either Robert's Rules or some other agreed-upon method) and use them at each meeting. Set a reasonable time limit for questions and/or comments from non-executive committee members (a technique useful in any committee meeting). An efficient and useful executive committee will help make chapter meetings more efficient and useful as well.

As for the chapter meeting itself, there are two major illnesses to avoid: MARATHON MEETINGS and "SO BORING I WOULD ALMOST RATHER BE DOING MY HOME-WORK" MEETINGS. These two diseases are almost always found together. Tackling the MARATHON MEETING requires a two-sided approach. First, the meeting must be well-planned (see the above section on agendas). Second, the meeting must be well-executed. As a rule, the larger the chapter becomes, the more structured the meeting must become. Many chapter bylaws require that business be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order. This

is an excellent guide for conducting chapter business, but any agreed-upon procedure will do. The key is for the top officers to have a clear understanding of the procedure involved and for everyone else to have at least a working knowledge of it.

To brush up on Robert's Rules of Order, ask that a seminar on it be offered at the next conference you attend. Also, check with your student programs office about leadership development through your school. Of course, your sectional and regional staffs are also good resources to use. To refresh the rest of the chapter on the procedure for conducting chapter business, put on your own mini-chapter workshop on parliamentary procedure or distribute a short handout each semester on major parliamentary procedure rules. Don't forget to incorporate learning basic rules of order into the pledge program so pledges will be prepared when they become actives. If implementing a more structured approach to chapter meetings is new for you, then take your time with it. Make sure the chapter understands the procedures and agrees with the need for more structure.

Fine, you say, but all this "structure" talk sounds boooooooring. It doesn't have to be! The most important feature of exciting meetings is exciting announcements and reports. You don't have to be a comedian, but a positive and enthusiastic attitude will show that you think your report is important and fun, and this feeling will rub off on the membership. And why just announce a project or party - why not advertise it with a skit? As long as it is short, gets the information across, and is either funny or so bad that it is funny, a skit can provide just the touch of variety needed to keep a meeting from being dull. (Limit yourself to one a meeting, though. Even good, fun ideas can be overdone.) Another method to keep people interested during a meeting is to have some sort of funny yet meaningful award. Perhaps award an old, gross shoe each week to the active who "went that extra mile". Be creative. And don't forget to let the chapter know when it or one of its members has done a good job. A "thank you" or a "congratulations" can go a long way toward creating a positive feeling about the group and the meeting as a whole. These are just a few ideas - experiment with your own. Even though the content of a meeting may be dull, the delivery of that information doesn't have to be!



## CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY

1. Plan your meetings carefully...and follow the plan
2. Use the executive committee to focus issues
3. Make meetings fun and interesting



## CLOSING

As stated in the beginning, bigger is not necessarily better. Many chapters prefer to remain a certain size, because they believe that is best for them and their campuses. Other chapters experience growth and wish to maintain it. The key in either scenario is for the chapter to make a conscious decision and to work to achieve that goal. Maintaining growth will mean some changes. Many things that chapters do are done in the name of “tradition”. Tradition is fine as long as it serves a useful purpose. Tradition for tradition’s sake is not a reason to do anything. Don’t let tradition stand in the way of change that is required to maintain growth. One change that is difficult to face is that you may not have the same close-knit chapter you had before. Many members who joined in the “good old days” may not like the new larger chapter and may choose to find other outlets. Respect their decision, while at the same time letting them know they are wanted back should they wish to return.

While change may be difficult, it is not necessarily bad. With a larger Brotherhood, you will be able to do several times more service than in the past, including some projects you may not have been able to handle before. Also, the principles of and ideals that created Alpha Phi Omega will be taught to and instilled in more people. Plus, with growth, comes a wider variety of experiences to carry with you after college.

What Alpha Phi Omega will be on your campus is greatly influenced by what you want it to be. Visualize what you can become, then take the steps necessary to achieve it!

GOOD LUCK!