

2009 SOS Submission: Puget Sound New Board Succession Management Process



Submission Date: 2008
Chapter Name: Puget Sound
Chapter ID:
Chapter Location: Seattle, WA
Chapter Membership Size: Large (301+)

Contact for this Submission: Lisa Downs
Email Address: ldowns99@yahoo.com
Phone Number:
Chapter Title: Chapter President
Chapter Website URL: <http://www.astdps.org/>

Description: New approach to selecting Board members.

Need Addressed: For several years interest in Board positions has not been strong enough to allow us to present a competitive slate of candidates to our members for a full-chapter vote. Targeted recruitment of our successors by Board members produced inconsistent results. In 2008 our ability to deliver value to our members was damaged when two new members left the Board because they could not, for several reasons, fulfill their responsibilities. While our by-laws require election of our President and President Elect by the full membership, they give us flexibility regarding choice of all other Board positions. This allowed us to create a new process we hoped would identify, recruit and fit potential candidates to open Board positions to more successfully meet chapter needs and individual skills and preferences.

Target Audience: All Chapter members, particularly potential Board members.

Cost/Resources: Board member time. Space for meetings. Materials: (10) Recruitment Desk Books, handouts, applications, selection matrix. (copies of all materials attached) No direct financial cost to the chapter.

How did you implement?

- VP Organizational Development developed proposal; President helped refine
- President discussed proposal with Executive Committee
- Executive Committee recommended proposal to the Board

The primary purpose of this "new approach" was to put the best qualified, fully informed people in the most appropriate board positions (see #4 above). By "fully informed" we also meant "fully warned..." regarding the not-insignificant responsibilities and expectations of the various Board roles. We wanted people to self-select out if they had any doubts about their abilities to fully perform on the Board.

Our by-laws require the President and President Elect to be elected by the membership at large. All other Board positions are appointive. Without this provision, this approach would not have been possible unless we were willing to amend the by-laws, which wouldn't have been possible in the time we had.

- At our September 5th Board meeting the Board adopted the proposal on a pilot (one year) basis

Part of the success of this approach depended on participation in the process by all Board members. In adopting the proposal, every Board member agreed to help inform and select new Board members.

Phase I: Messaging and Recruitment

1. New approach to selecting Board members was announced at the September Chapter meeting, in our online newsletter and on our web site. We made the informational sessions EventBrite events so people could register for them, and so we'd have some idea of how many responses we were getting.
2. Interested members were invited to one of three "informational sessions" scheduled to allow maximum availability (mornings, evenings, immediately following Chapter meeting; three different physical locations).

3. VP Organizational Development created a "Board Member Desk Book" to provide interested members with information on Board operations.
4. Board members personally reached out to members they thought might be interested in or a good fit for one or more Board positions, encouraging and inviting them to attend one of the three informational sessions.

Phase II: Informational Sessions

1. At each 1-hour informational session, participants "signed in" with basic primary contact information and indicated initial interest.
2. Our President facilitated each session, during which she shared information regarding Board roles and responsibilities, our Chapter vision and Board goals, our recent history, the recruiting process, etc. A short version of the Desk Book was used as the foundation for the session agendas. Copies of the full Desk Book were distributed for reference and collected at the end of the session.
3. From 3 to 6 Board members attended each of the informational sessions! This made for lively discussions and showed our collective commitment to the Board selection process.
4. After each session, attendees were sent electronically a **brief** "application" to return by October 13th to provide us with more details regarding their interest, vision for the chapter/their "fit," and commitment.
5. Attendees were also emailed the complete Desk Book to peruse on their own time and were encouraged to contact current Board members in whose positions they were particularly interested; Board member photos and contact information were in the Desk Book.
6. We invited all of our potential Board members to participate fully in our October 3rd Board Meeting – from receiving the Secretary's call for agenda items, to receiving the minutes after the meeting.

Phase III: Applications

1. As they were received, applications, addressed to the President, were copied and sent electronically to all Board members.

Phase IV: Selection

1. On October 17th nine Board members met for 90 minutes to discuss all applicants, and decide who would be invited to join the Board and in what positions. (One Board member who could not attend gave us his recommendations ahead of time.) We used a matrix to lay out our own recommendations and those of other Board members.
2. The discussion was very frank. We exchanged experiences we'd had with each applicant and discussed their potential to be strong contributors and leaders. Applicants' preferences were considered; when we thought they might serve best in a different role, either our President or President Elect made a personal call to the applicant to discuss our thoughts and see if they were interested in a different role.
3. Most importantly, this approach allowed us to consider the makeup of the entire new Board with different applicants playing different roles, looking for the best balance overall.
4. Our President Elect called each applicant not recommended for a Board position. We didn't want to discourage or lose them, so besides thanking them for their interest, she suggested specific ways they could add value to the Chapter in the coming year.

Outcome/Results:

- Fourteen members attended three informational meetings.
- Eight members submitted applications for six open Board positions.
- Six applicants were offered and five accepted Board positions for 2009.
- One Board position, VP of SIGs/GIGs/PDNs, was not filled. Discussion of this program was included on the December Annual Board Retreat agenda.
- All 2009 Board Members participated in the December 13th day-long Annual Board Retreat
- The new Board was introduced at the December 16th Chapter Meeting.

Tips/Lessons Learned:

Perhaps allow more time between when applications are due from the candidates and the special Board meeting to discuss the roles/fit. The date we gave the candidates that they would hear back from us was the Wednesday after the October 17th Board meeting, and this gave us little time to engage in clarifying conversations with the candidates prior to needing to make a decision.

Also, be sure to have great communication with the interested participants/candidates and with the current Board along the way so people are kept updated and aren't wondering what's happening. Be open and honest with specific reasons why someone was not selected, if applicable, and encourage anyone who is not invited to join the Board to try again in the future.

Share the process between the President and President Elect with other Board members participating as needed. Our by-laws allow this approach; only our President and President Elect are elected by the full membership. Other Board positions are appointed by the President. We have an active Executive Committee (four members: President, Past President, President Elect, VP of Finance) which provides another level of review and input for an idea like this, prior to full Board consideration. The Executive Committee's approval and support made this happen in the relatively short window we had.