



What's a Snippet? Glad you asked! A Snippet is short article about meetings or parliamentary procedure. New snippets are released on the first day of every month at www.agreatmeeting.com.



Snippet #141 Officer Reports

It's an assignment many seek and few are given--writing officer reports. It's also one of the least understood and most dreaded assignments. *But why?* What happens between "Please vote for me" and "This is what I did"? How should that story be told?

Perhaps it's best to start with how it should *not* be told – as a classroom assignment parallel to "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." Far too many officers assume everyone wants to hear what they did in the past year, rather than how they *helped the association achieve its mission*. What makes officers think how many meetings they attended, how many phone calls and emails they had, and how many members they visited are any more interesting than watching videos of someone else's summer vacation?

It's reasonable to assume that the members already are aware that:

- You were honored to be elected and appreciate the opportunity to serve;
- This association is amazing, and the members are wonderful;
- It was a challenging growth experience and you appreciate the help of your family and colleagues; and
- You stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before you.

Winning an election is not a license to remake the association in the president's image. Taking a turn at the tiller doesn't necessarily mean repainting the boat or setting a new course. The association has a history and a future, and the officer's report is only a navigation point. It should answer some simple but strategic questions.

- Where were we in our journey when this term started, and where are we now?
- Have we made any changes in strategy, and, if so, what are they?
- Did we encounter obstacles that slowed – or even halted – our progress and how did we or will we overcome them?
- What hurdles lie ahead? Do we have a strategy in place to meet them?

Long and short term planning isn't a flip chart exercise to be dusted off periodically to generate more objectives than any organization can complete in fifty years. It's integral to plotting the ongoing activities and direction of the association.

Officer reports should start with a brief overview of their goals and objectives for the year. As treasurer, did we plan to set aside more in reserves, invest in special projects, find ways to economize? What did we do this year to meet those goals? Where are we on that track?

As secretary, are our corporate records still in good shape? If not, what has been done to recover those lost minutes or find the corporate charter? Are we communicating with the members effectively, keeping them apprised of important information and sending required notices on time?

As president, where do we stand relative to when this term started? Should we stay the course, or consider a correction? Do we anticipate smooth sailing, or are there icebergs ahead? Officer reports need to be strategic, not tactical, and geared to organizational goals and accomplishments, not personal gratification.