

LA240 – How To: Organizing a Typical Lodge Function

National OA Adviser Training

Session Length: 25 Minutes

Overview:

- There are common elements to all OA functions
- OA functions serve multiple purposes
- The Adviser brings experience to make sure “what” needs to happen happens
- The youth Vice-Chief/Chairman learns/improves skills for “how” everything gets done
- Functions are a great chance to teach the benefit of helpers (a committee)

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the role of Adviser in an OA function
- Discover how to coach the Function Vice-Chief/Chairman
- Learn how to develop the Function committee
- Understand common key aspects of each function

Slide 2 - Overview

Detailed Outline of the Session:

This session will help an adviser understand the common elements of an OA function or event, key steps in conducting an event, and coaching and growth areas for the Event Vice-Chief/Chairman (VC/C). All lodges will have many types of events and accomplish the event in many ways. However, there are many common elements that will be explored in this session.

Events and activities serve multiple purposes within the lodge. First it serves as a venue to help train our youth leaders. It gives the youth leader a chance to learn about planning, budgeting, promotions, recruiting, administration, and running an event that can have several hundred attendees. Second, the event is also a great opportunity to create additional leadership opportunities by involving more youth in the event as helpers and as part of the event committee. It is up to us as the advisers to help make sure the youth leaders get the benefit of our experience and knowledge as they develop the skills they will use as leaders in their future endeavors. Finally, our events and

activities play a very important role in member retention. Fun, engaging events will help keep people involved.

Slide 3 – Course Learning Objectives

This session will cover several topics for a successful lodge/chapter event including the role of the Adviser, coaching/mentoring the youth in charge, how to develop the committee and understanding the common key aspects of an OA event.

OA functions and events (1) serve as an activity for the lodge and (2) provide leadership opportunities for our youth. Even though the ultimate responsibility of running a function or event falls on the Lodge Chief, it is better to allow another youth to lead it. This frees up the Chief to do his job and it creates additional leadership opportunities.

Slide 4 – Role of the Adviser

What do you think is the role of the adviser? These roles are common to all adult advisers in the OA: coaching, mentoring, training, counseling, cheerleading and guiding. The adviser brings the knowledge of how to plan for, promote, budget, etc. for the function. It is the adviser's responsibility to teach the VC/C "what" has to be done and then help the VC/C figure out "how" he will get things done. The adviser must have experience to be able to coach and mentor effectively.

Slide 5 – Role of the Youth Vice-Chief/Chairman

Is the OA "Boy led?" Think about how your lodge interprets separating the role and responsibilities of the adviser (adult) and the VC/C (youth). For most lodges the role of the youth chair of an event spans many functions. These include:

1. **Organizer** – the VC/C must translate what has to be done into how he wants it done. It is up to him to define what he wants to happen and when it needs to happen so he can recruit and then coordinate his team of youth and committee members.
2. **Recruiter** – most OA events are most successful if the VC/C has a committee to help get different tasks done. This takes recruiting. A way to get attendance is to recruit team members from across the lodge, not everyone from only one or two chapters.
3. **Delegator** – the VC/C must be comfortable with delegating or he will end up doing everything himself, get burn-out, and not get to enjoy his hard work because he will be exhausted. The VC/C should delegate all tasks that do not require him, i.e. the only tasks the VC/C performs are those that only he can do.

4. **Project Manager & Integrator** – once the work is defined and assigned, the VC/C shifts into monitoring to make sure the work is getting done and integrating the different teams
5. **Motivator** – the VC/C is a cheerleader and motivator to his team to help keep them focused, encouraged and motivated

Slide 6 – Function or Event Committees

Lodges run with many committees and depending on the size of the lodge, can encompass many functions. Some of these can include:

- Program
- Location/facilities
- Logo/patch design
- Memorabilia (patches, t-shirts)
- Banquet
- Food
- Fellowship
- Promotion

Breaking the work across multiple committees has several benefits:

1. The VC/C does not do everything – avoids burnout
2. Gets more Arrowmen involved, possibly recruiting for the next VC/C for this function
3. Gives the youth more experience and develops future lodge leaders

Slide 7 – Adviser Role at Start

The adviser can be very helpful in this stage of the function planning. The VC/C may not be aware of all the things that must be done to prepare for and conduct the function. The adviser can use this discussion to help the VC/C better understand what is required to conduct the function.

Things for the adult to be aware of and watch for to help guide the VC/C:

- a. If the function is done annually, the VC/C may base his plan on what has been done in the past, propagating bad habits.
- b. If this is a new function, the VC/C may not understand what is needed and does not know what needs to be done so not sure what committees to form

- c. The VC/C wants to do everything. The adviser needs to help the VC/C understand with school, a job, family, church, etc. that he would be more successful with a team helping him

Slide 8 – Elements of a Function

The following are several common elements of a well thought out lodge function. These are things that need to be accomplished to prepare for and conduct an OA function or event.

Remember the key responsibility of the adviser is to explain “what” needs to happen and the youth chair is responsible for figuring out “how” each gets done.

A review with the youth chair of the following will prepare him for a successful event.

Purpose: come to agreement on the purpose of the function. Use this to develop measures of success. Measures of success could be number of attendees, amount of work completed, more attendees than last year, etc. Do not take this lightly, especially if the function is something repeated every year. This is a chance to have a discussion on why the function is put on and give the VC/C a chance to put his thoughts and “spin” on the event.

Audience/attendees: who will be attending the event? What are their ages? What is their experience in this type of function? Are special skills or training required? What special preparations or accommodations will be needed? If food is part of the function, will there be accommodations for food allergies? If there will be non-OA members or non-Scouts, will the event be meaningful/fun to them –or– what has to be done to make it meaningful/fun for them? Here is where to find that “hook” – something really fun that makes people want to participate. Explore examples with the youth committee – such things like: steak dinner, games, activities, raffle, etc.

Outcome: define the expected outcomes of the function. Use this to refine the measures of success (the VC/C surviving the function is not a measure of success)

Budget: the adviser should have a budget framework the VC/C can start with. The budget template should have line items for any and all possible expenses and income for the function. The VC/C can use this to shape the event and know what he has to work with. A good rule of thumb is to add a 10% to 15% contingency to the budget.

Staff: this is a great chance for the adviser to help the VC/C understand all the tasks that must be done to prepare for the function and conduct the function. This is also an opportunity to point out roles that are already defined and may just need to be brought into the function staff, such as promotions. Recruiting a staff also helps keep other youth and adults involved. This also provides development



for both the youth and adults on the staff. A paired adult to each youth member is a great way to alleviate those “idle” adults.

Preparations/timeline: the adviser should be able to help guide the VC/C in planning the timeline. An effective method is to take each task, agree on its duration, determine when it must be completed, and then work backwards from the due date to determine the start date for each task. This is commonly called a “back-dating calendar”. A simple chart is very helpful to see both dates as well as make sure that one or two people are not overloaded if they are involved in multiple tasks that all hit at the same time. Don’t forget to include committee meetings

Function or Event Schedule: there must be at least a start and stop time for the function/event. There should be a schedule so the participants know when and where they need to be during the function. If the function is a banquet, the general participants do not need to know much more than start and end times. This is not true for those putting on the banquet. There needs to be a schedule and script for the banquet staff to make sure the function stays on track.

Promotion: It is not a lot of fun to work hard to “throw a party” and not have anyone show up. Promotions for all functions is a critical aspect to getting people to attend. Posters can be used to advertise, direct, or accentuate. Hand-outs are also a great way to promote. Depending on the type of event, orientation packets, maps, schedules, etc. may be appropriate and helpful. Regardless of what promotion efforts are employed, Social Media must be at the very center of those efforts.

Memorabilia: Have you ever been to a Scouting event that did not have a patch or t-shirt? If patches, t-shirts, cups, etc. are to be given out then there must be a design that gets approved then a vendor chosen, order placed that allows time to make the memorabilia and shipped to the function lead for memorabilia. This is a key item for the timeline.

Location: while this may be obvious, functions need to be held somewhere. The “where” is dependent on the function activities, number attending, etc.

Registration: Knowing who is going to attend is important to the cooks if there is food, enough tools if this is a service function, the budget, etc.

Recognitions: At a minimum, the chairman and his committee should be recognized at the function. Include recognitions for others that provided support or helped. Recognition can range from public accolades, certificates, or plaques.

Risks and Issues: all functions have some type of risk and issues. Some can be foreseen, like weather for an outdoor function. The adviser can be very helpful in pointing out common risks and issues so that the VC/C has a chance to think about them and plan for handling them. This is also a good teaching point for the

VC/C since risks and issues are not something the Scouts naturally think about. This is also useful for explaining the contingency put into the budget.

Cleanup/Closeout: at the end of the event, have a session to make sure the event is properly closed out and the location/facilities are left better than found. The last step is a review of the function from pre-planning through end. This is a chance for the VC/C to express lessons learned and the adviser to impart words of wit and wisdom to help the VC/C grow. This is also an opportunity to pass along helpful information to the next chairman.

Slide 9 – Ordeal Checklist

One of the most common functions a lodge/chapter conducts is the Ordeal. As a helpful guide, attached in a separate Excel file is a checklist (*Chapter Induction Weekend_Checklist.xls*) for a typical Ordeal weekend. Included within the file are typical planning topics that most lodges will need. These are organized by “tabs” in the file. The first tab is a listing of typical planning topic questions. The second tab contains a back-dating calendar. The third and fourth tabs deal with staff. The next tab outlines typical equipment needs. Tabs for listing the candidates, locations, service projects, budgets and costs and a detailed weekend schedule are also included. An Ordeal committee can find this file very useful for planning and executing a great Ordeal weekend.

Slide 10 – Event Closeout

Following the event many advisers fail to have that lessons learned discussion with the chairman and with the committee. This is a vital responsibility of the adviser to take the time to reflect and further help the youth develop. A discussion after the event of went well, what could be improved and what might be eliminated is something your youth need and learn from. This is also a good time to learn about other committee youth that might be candidates for leadership for the next event or other function happening in the lodge year. Even if the event was not a huge success or didn't go quite as planned, make sure to emphasize the positive and close on a high note. Recognition is one of the best ways to give that positive feeling to the youth. Make sure this happens.

Slide 11 – Conclusion

We reviewed the roles of both the youth and adviser for a lodge function or event. Lodges can have many different functions and events during the year and there are many common elements. The guidance of the adviser is critical for a successful experience for the youth. Remember lodge/chapter events and functions serve multiple



purposes: serving as an activity, providing development opportunities for our youth, and forming the cornerstone of the lodge's member retention efforts.

One of the main purposes of an Order of the Arrow Lodge is to provide further leadership development opportunities to the youth. As a reminder, the Mission of the Order of the Arrow states:

"The mission of the Order of the Arrow is to fulfill its purpose as an integral part of the Boy Scouts of America through positive youth leadership under the guidance of selected capable adults."

The leadership positions and committees provide these opportunities for our youth to develop into the leaders of tomorrow. These opportunities provide the path "to crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others", the last stated Purpose of the Order of the Arrow.