

Leadership Transition

Your year as an officer is coming to an end, and new officers are being selected. How do you leave your position gracefully? How can you ensure that the new officers are ready to lead the organization?

A thorough leadership transition plan has several benefits:

- Provides for transfer of significant organizational knowledge.
- Minimizes the confusion of leadership changeover.
- Gives outgoing leaders a sense of closure.
- Utilizes the valuable contributions of experienced leaders, usually the most neglected members in the group.
- Helps incoming leadership absorb the special expertise of the outgoing leadership.
- Increases the knowledge and confidence of the new leadership.
- Minimizes the loss of momentum and accomplishments for the group.

When do you start? Early.

- Begin early in the year to identify emerging leaders.
- Encourage these potential leaders through personal contact. Help them by developing skills; delegating responsibility; sharing the benefits of leadership; clarifying job responsibilities, letting them know that transition will be orderly and thorough; and modeling an open, encouraging leadership style.
- When new officers have been elected, orient them together as a group with all of the outgoing leaders. The process provides the new leaders with an opportunity to understand each other's roles and to start building their leadership team.
- Be sure to transfer the knowledge and information necessary for them to function well. An organization history and flow-chart might be helpful.

What do you need to transfer?

Think back to the first few weeks. What do you wish someone had told you about?

- Effective leadership qualities and skills.
- Problems and helpful ideas, procedures and recommendations.

Do you regret no one found time to:

- Write and share reports containing traditions, ideas or completed projects, continuing projects and concerns, or ideas never carried out.
- Go through personal and organizational files.
- Acquaint new officers with physical environment, supplies and equipment.
- Introduce related personnel (advisors, contacts, etc.).
- Share anything else that is important to know.

Do you wish there had been a complete record of the organization's structure, goals, and accomplishments through organized files?

- Create the following for your organization's future leaders:
- Constitution and by-laws
- Organizational goals and objectives for previous year(s)
- Job descriptions/role clarifications
- Status reports on ongoing projects
- Evaluations of previous reports and programs
- Resources(contracts, lists)
- Mailing lists
- Previous minutes and reports

Based on "Leadership Transition" developed by University Of Michigan Student Organization Development Center.