



The Secretary's Pavane

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Definition of "Pavane" - A measured, stately dance in which all steps are known to all the participants.

The Secretary in a professional organization such as an IEEE Chapter, Section or Society acts as the 'spark plug' for the 'engine' that we think of as the Executive Committee (ExCom). By maintaining an awareness of critical event timing and functions and ensuring that the necessary 'spark' is sent to the relevant officers to initiate preparation and follow up action as needed, the Secretary keeps the entire organization functioning smoothly. In its final form, a well functioning Chapter responding to the Secretary's prompting behaves like a well choreographed dance troop.

The cycle of meeting activity for a typical Chapter shown below will illustrate this:

Chapter/Section Administrative Teleconferences/Meetings:

- Meeting date – 14 days: Send draft agenda to Chair for comment and revision.
- Meeting date – 12 days: Send revised agenda and last minutes to Chapter Officers.
- Meeting date – 10 days: Send calendar notice of meeting to Chapter Officers.
- Meeting date – 7 days: Send e-mail meeting notice to Chapter Officers.
- Meeting date – 2 days: Send e-mail reminder of meeting to Chapter Officers.
- Meeting date: ----- Transcribe minutes of the meeting.
- Meeting date: ----- Record attendance at meeting.
- Meeting date + 1 day: Send draft minutes to Chair for review and comment.
- Meeting date + 2 days: File V-Tools: L-31 form for IEEE HQ.
- Meeting date + 5 days: Send revised draft minutes to Chapter Officers.
- Meeting date + 7 days: Update next agenda based on revised draft minutes.
- Meeting date + 10 days: Setup V-Tools calendar meeting page for next meeting.

Of course, as with any dance, all partners in the dance must respond in the proper sequence and at the proper time. As above, for example, the Secretary is dependent on the response from the Chair to the draft agenda sent for comment. If nothing comes back, the rhythm is broken, and the dance falters. In any volunteer organization, time commitments are at the discretion of the volunteer, and it may not always be possible to respond fully, immediately, when the initiative is handed off.

In cases where circumstances force a change in the 'steps', it becomes critical to communicate this to the dance partner. A quick e-mail or phone message that confirms:

- I received your document (message/ request/ missive) and
- Should be able to reply by (date and time as appropriate) is vital.

The first part lets the partner know that the first message successfully got through. This puts them at ease. At least they won't be wondering if it got lost in cyberspace. The second part allows them to alter their normal 'dance' pattern to adjust to changing circumstances.

A similar, though shorter dance occurs between the Chapter Secretary and the Section Secretary as they near the time for the monthly Section ExCom meeting:

Section ExCom Meetings:

- Meeting date – 10 days: Compose Chapter Report for the Section ExCom.
- Meeting date – 9 days: Send Chapter Report to the Chapter Chair for Review.
- Meeting date – 5 days: Send revised Chapter Report to Section Secretary.
- Meeting date: Ensure Chapter is represented at Section ExCom Meeting.
- Meeting date + 5 days: Distribute draft ExCom minutes to Chapter Officers.

As the reports arrive from the Chapter Secretaries, each one should receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of the document. Without that, what is the sender to believe? It got lost? It made it through? It was illegible? It got scrambled? It did not make sense?

Also, the rapid turn around of the meeting minutes to the Chapter Secretaries is vital to ensure that actions at the Section level are communicated back to the Chapters as rapidly as possible. This is especially critical when there is a sudden change in a well publicized Section event, or some vital change in operating methods or policy takes place.

Finally a response from the Chapter Secretary to the Section Secretary that they received the copy of the last minutes helps the Section Secretary relax and know that their final twirl in the 'dance' was successfully completed.

Occasionally, some parts of the dance are performed almost 'Solo'. Preparation for a normal monthly membership meeting is a typical example:

Chapter Membership Presentation Meetings:

- Meeting date – 90 days: Confirm speaker with Bio, Abstract and Photo.
- Meeting date – 75 days: Confirm Meeting Venue with support elements.
- Meeting date – 60 days: Prepare web 'Meeting Poster' for this event.

Meeting date – 45 days:	Setup V-Tools calendar meeting page.
Meeting date – 30 days:	Send e-mail notice to members (V-Tools link).
Meeting date – 14 days:	Send e-mail reminder to members.
Meeting date – 5 days:	Send e-mail reminder of members.
Meeting date:	Print list of registered attendees for “Sign in Sheet”.
Meeting date:	Attend meeting and help with last minute ‘issues’.
Meeting date + 1 day:	Send “Thank You” e-mail to speaker.
Meeting date + 2 day:	Fill in V-Tools: L-31 form for IEEE HQ.
Meeting date + 7 days:	Send out survey forms to attendees for DL talk.
Meeting date + 10 days:	Compose meeting article for newsletter.

As you can see, planning ahead is one of the elements that ensure that the dance is well performed, and that no one missed a step.

Chapter Calendar:

One of the most powerful tools in the secretary’s kit is the long range planning calendar. This calendar needs to look at least one year ahead of the current date at all times. The Secretary should be planning activities for the Chapter along with the other relevant Officers at least one year ahead of the current date.

There are a number of advantages to taking this long range view:

- Regular meeting dates can be planned well in advance, and venues, menus, support functions (A/V, Computer, Projector, Microphones, etc.) can be anticipated and scheduled.
- By establishing regular meeting days, times and locations, members (and Officers) become used to the routine, and begin to bend their other schedules around the planned meetings.
- Different types of meetings may be noted (administrative, presentation, tours of plants, workshops, classes, PAC’s, etc.)
- The schedule can be interleaved with other related events of note: Section and Society Conferences, Section ExCom meetings, Society Symposia, Sister Chapter events of interest to your membership, etc.

Section V-Tools Calendar:

The Section / Chapter V-Tools Calendar becomes an extension of the Chapter’s long range planning calendar, and is one of the communications tools needed to keep members updated on Chapter activity planning. Conversely, the “Register for Meeting” feature of the V-Tools calendar provides feed back from Chapter members as to how many are planning to attend a particular meeting.

Meeting date – 45 days:	Setup V-Tools calendar meeting page.
Meeting date – 30 days:	Send e-mail notice to members (include V-Tools link).

Meeting date – 1 day:	Check the number of people registered and advise on refreshments.
Meeting date + 2 day:	Fill in V-Tools L-31 form to register meeting.

Chapter Web Site:

The Chapter web site falls into the Secretary’s area of responsibility. If you do not possess the skills to actively manipulate the Chapter web site, send your update requests through the Section Website director for action.

1/Week:	Review web site for currency.
1/Month:	Review web site for next meeting accuracy.
1/Qtr:	Update long range plans.
1/Yr:	Include update as a discussion topic for meeting agenda.

Chapter On-Line Community:

The Chapter On-Line Community, if one exists, also falls into the Secretary’s area of responsibility. Ideally, the Secretary should also be one of the administrators for the On-Line Community.

As Occurs:	Accept or Reject new member requests.
1/Week:	Review site for currency.
1/Month:	Update site with next meeting agenda and past meeting minutes.
1/Qtr:	Review content of entire site.
1/Yr:	Include update as a discussion topic for meeting agenda.

Of course, all this activity requires a good tool box, well stocked with the appropriate tool for each task. With these tools, the individual jobs become only a matter of knowing when to throw which switch, and how far to turn each valve.

Tools:

- 1) ExCom Meeting agenda template.
- 2) Macro to facilitate taking minutes directly using the current agenda.
- 3) ExCom Meeting notice template.
- 4) Section “V-Tools” for calendar meeting updates.
- 5) Chapter ExCom attendance spreadsheet.
- 6) Chapter Speakers Planning Spreadsheet.
- 7) Link to IEEE HQ (L31 Form) through the “V-Tools” on the web.
- 8) Section Chapter monthly Report Format (summarize minutes).
- 9) Blank Roster of the Chapter Executive Committee.
- 10) E-mail contact list for the Chapter membership (SAMIEEE).

With the tools above, a solid long range plan in place, and cooperative fellow Officers, an active Chapter keeps a Secretary busy, but not frantic. The ‘dance’ is indeed ‘measured’ and, to some degree, ‘stately’, and with all the ‘partners’ dancing in time, it can be a pleasure to watch.

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