

# Doing POT with HOG

## GOMO

Go ahead and put that phone down... no need to call the federal agents. Harley-Davidson is not out there working with new creative ways to generate additional funds. P.O.T. stands for "Primary Officer Training," an informational seminar session provided by the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.). I was planning on covering Harley's riding organization, H.O.G., first, but this was floating around my shoulder melon so I opted to write about this first. Those of you already familiar with H.O.G. chapters could find this informative anyway.

Ever wonder how the members who volunteer as Officers know how to run a H.O.G. Chapter? How would you put together a successful ride or event, know how to handle the Chapter's finances, or how about dealing with new members or new riders, then there is knowing liabilities and responsibilities, and the list goes on. Conducting the operation of a local H.O.G. Chapter, whether it's 30 or over 1000 members, takes a lot of information and direction. Well, the higher ups of the Harley Owners Group in Milwaukee recognized these issues 15 years ago and proceeded to compile the tools needed for the Primary Officers of the chapters around the country and the rest of the world where H.O.G. has its presence.

Now, 15 years ago things weren't as well put together in a package as it is now. Back then there was a lot of learning on H.O.G.'s part of what a chapter needs to know. Add the fact that the early days were run on a far smaller budget; the information, though useful, may not have been presented in its best possible form for Officers to consider or use. But these days the P.O.T. sessions would rival and even exceed many major corporations' training seminars. For those of you that are not familiar with H.O.G.'s structure, each chapter needs to have four Primary Officers – Director, Assistant Director, Treasurer and Secretary, plus each chapter needs to be sponsored by an authorized Harley-Davidson Dealer. After those requirements are addressed the chapter can have additional discretionary positions that include Road Captains, Webmaster, Editor, Activities Officer, Historian and more noted by the Chapter Handbook/Guidelines constructed by some very smart folks at H.O.G.



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The P.O.T. sessions are normally scheduled for an early spring weekend (Friday and Saturday) throughout regions in the country. This year they were held in Milwaukee, WI, Las Vegas, NV, Atlantic City, NJ and Orlando, FL. I attended the sessions in Atlantic City, the sixth time I have gone to P.O.T., and since the weather was great, the first time I was willing to ride to the event. Keep in mind that these sessions are classroom-based and fill up a day's schedule for two days, so riding isn't the primary reason to go, but it sure makes it better when you can.



The topics reviewed cover items such as Activities and Riding, which include sessions on Creating Memorable Rides, Group Riding Challenges, Keys to Successful Group Riding, Producing Seamless Events and Ride Leader Discussions. Then there is Building Membership and Marketing that help us face the tasks of Communicating with impact, Communication workshops, Engaging Riders into the Chapter and Reaching Out to New Riders. It doesn't stop there, a Chapter Management course that teaches us Chapter-Dealer relationships, Leading the Chapter, Planning for Officer Change and knowing who their Regional Managers are and how they can help you. Dealing with Risk gathers you together to discuss the Understanding of Risk, Solving Risk Challenges and a Risk Management Forum helps present and hopefully recognize problems and possible solutions. Since we are dealing with a wide range of people and personalities, Enhancing Rider Relationships present classes on Motivating Volunteers, Productive Conflict and Working with Interesting People. Finally, to help Officers deal with the money side of operations, Financial Effectiveness lessons discusses Understanding Finance and there is a Finance Forum for input from all sides. As you can see, H.O.G. certainly puts together information to cover all aspects of operating a chapter. Now, you do not take all these classes, you select about eight that interest you and/or take the certain ones that are recommended for your officer position. If you wanted to take all the classes you would need to attend almost all the P.O.T. dates; though it would make a good road trip, it's not too practical.



Since I am the present Director of the Woodstock, NY Chapter and an MSF RiderCoach, I opted to sign up for classes related to running the chapter better with new ideas and go through group riding procedures. I am one that enjoys variety when it comes to both events and riding. I understand that doing some social activities and routes that are well attended should remain within the fold for both longtime members and new members to experience, but even those can be rev'd up with new spins to keep folks coming back. The instructors for the classes do a great job of helping you release the potential to develop new ways to

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look at old ideas as well as come up with new ones. But as much as the instructors present those ideas the best resource in the room are the officers from other chapters. Many have fantastic ideas that have worked and they'll also let you know the ones that didn't pan out too well.

Granted, H.O.G. has a baseline of requirements for operation of Chapters, but the one thing you'll learn at P.O.T. is that no two chapters are alike. Between the combination of member personalities, officer direction, input from sponsoring dealers and additional forces, what may or may not work for one chapter could have a different outcome by another and with a little brainstorming you can always modify an idea to make it more inspirational and successful for your members. After every P.O.T. that I've attended I always let people know that the greatest point for me is the interaction with all the other chapter officers. Whether it's learning about a new social game present by the folks of the Cut and Shoot Chapter, Texas, or group riding tips discussed with members from the Fairfax, VA and Baltimore Metro Chapters, the greatest supply of information to fuel your group is from all those attending that have gone through the works.

It's not all work here do you really think you can put over 700 H.O.G. members together and not have a party? Friday night of the weekend, H.O.G. throws an evening of dinner, music and dance that keeps everyone rocking into the night. It's always the highlight and never a disappointment; a grand time for all.

When all is said and done you understand that it is a lot of work that chapter officers put in to make things work to be safe and enjoyable for their members. P.O.T. will give you saddlebags full of new tools and ideas to give your group a sense of direction and renewal. I can thank Harley-Davidson for creating all those memories and folks I have met because of riding my H-D, but I really savor the experiences I've shared with my fellow H.O.G. Officers and Members. If you've never been involved with a H.O.G. chapter, why not check one out in your area. You may soon find out why H.O.G.'s motto is "Ride & Have Fun."

