

Unit 3

Running Effective Meetings



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Running Effective Meetings

Volunteers have many demands on their time. If an organization persists in unproductive, listless, unclear or boring meetings, it will soon begin to lose its volunteers. It's important that meetings be as effective as possible and at the same time meets the needs of participants.

Tips for running effective meetings

Meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives, keep updated on current events, provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive. But most of all, meetings allow groups to pull resources together for decision-making.

Meeting preparation is essential in ensuring the meeting time is well spent. Advance preparations include asking yourself, What? Why?, Who?, When?, Where? and How?

See *Tool # 5: Before Holding a Meeting.*

Did you know? It is estimated that other forms of communication such as memos, letters, conference calls, face-to-face discussion and email could replace over 50% of meetings.

Source: www.boarddevelopment.org



Think about the 4 R's when preparing for and conducting a meeting:

Reason

The agenda is the basis of any meeting. It gives direction, structure and purpose to the meeting.

Ensure that the agenda is circulated prior to the meeting so that members are informed and prepared to participate in the meeting.

See Tool# 6. Developing a Good Agenda

Roles

Ensure that all board members, particularly the chair understand their roles at the meeting. The chair is responsible to facilitate the meeting and ensure the meeting is conducted in an efficient and effective manner.

Role of the Chair:

The Chair has two main responsibilities

- To ensure that the job gets done
- To guide group development and nurture individual group members

It is critical that the chair is familiar with parliamentary procedure.

See Tool #7 Explanation of Motions.

Role of Participants:

Adequate preparation, objective participation and commitment to follow through are required of each individual present to ensure best results.

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Rules

Here are some essential rules for running effective meetings:

- Have an agenda and stick to it
- Insist on one speaker at a time
- Never permit personal attacks or remarks
- Don't allow prolonged discussion without a motion

“Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.” —Napoleon Bonaparte

Reports

Minutes provide a legal record of decisions made, how they were made, any resulting action needed and who will be responsible for such action.

Minutes from the previous meeting and reports for the meeting should be circulated in advance so that they are read prior to the meeting. This information should never be read at the meeting. This is a waste of your valuable meeting time. The directors should entertain questions, but they should be specific and simply clarify or expand upon the report, not repeat it.

Source: Club Meetings, Volunteer Involvement Program, Sport and Recreation Commission



It is critical that “parking lot meetings” do not occur. Once a decision is made, it is final and no further discussion should take place outside of the boardroom. Encourage other board members to follow this rule and do not engage in topical discussions after the meeting while walking to your car.

Meeting Do's

- Set a time limit for your meeting and stick to it.
- Maintain order during meetings. Only one person should address an item at a time. If the same points are starting to be repeated during a discussion move on or call for a vote.
- Stay on topic. The chairperson needs to ensure the discussion of each agenda item is relevant and that everyone is allowed the opportunity to speak.
- Document action items in the minutes. Every agenda item should end with a decision as to what needs to be done and by whom.
- All meetings must have agendas that clearly outline the purpose of the meeting and the topics for discussion.
- Accurate minutes should be kept for all meetings. Minutes should be sent to all participants as soon as possible after the meeting.

Meeting Don'ts

- Don't meet if you don't need to. Meetings need clear objectives. If you can find other ways to accomplish your objectives (email, memo, fax) then do so.
- Don't allow members to engage in off topic side-bar discussions. Ensure everyone is focused on the topic at hand.
- Don't allow meetings to drag on. Set an end time and stick to it.
- Don't allow people to forget assigned tasks between meetings. Ensure follow-up is done on all action items with the individuals responsible for each action.
- Don't allow personal attacks during a meeting. Focus on the issue, not the person.

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FAQ: How can we improve attendance at our board meetings?

One of the primary responsibilities of a board member is to attend and participate in board meetings. The chairperson is primarily responsible to make meetings interesting and productive, however this task can be made easier with the input of your board members.

Ask your board members to suggest some hints and ideas on how to improve your meetings. Some sample questions include:

- Is the time and place of the meeting inconvenient for you?
- Do you find the meetings boring, poorly chaired, and too long?
- Are all of our meetings necessary?
- Should we give more notice for meetings?
- Are you aware of the board's attendance policy?

FAQ: What should I do if I don't agree with a board decision?

Many board decisions are not made unanimously. Board members often bring varying opinions and perspectives to the board table. These differing views are important and allow the board to fully examine issues and consider differing opinions. Healthy debate is critical to making better decisions. Board decisions are ultimately based on a majority, which sometimes creates compromise and dissenting opinions.

It is critical to remember that once a decision is made, that the board speaks with one voice. Individual board members are obligated to present this view to their community and the general public. They should never speak against a decision of the board. It is the responsibility of individual board members to present a united front and support the collective decision of the board.

FAQ: What information should be included in our minutes?

Keeping accurate records of your meetings is critical. Minutes are the primary source of history for your association.

Minutes should include the following information:

- Date, time and location of the meeting.
- List of those present as well as those unable to attend.
- State the main issues, points of view put forward and decision made in a neutral format for each agenda item.
- Record the full text of motions along with the outcome.
- Assign responsibility (who, when, how, resources) for any action items.
- Next meeting date.
- Time of adjournment.

Web Tool: Check out these websites to provide you guidance and resources on meeting procedures:

www.parliamentarians.org
www.ParliamentaryProcedures.org



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Before Holding a Meeting

Tool #5

Ask yourself the 5 W's and How

What?

What is the purpose of the meeting?

What are the desired outcomes?

Why?

Is the meeting necessary or is there another way to achieve the purpose?

Who?

Who are the right people responsible for each item?

Who are the decision-makers and who is knowledgeable in discussing the agenda item?

When?

When is the most appropriate time for the meeting?

Where?

Select a facility that is convenient and has the equipment you need.

How?

Prepare an agenda.

Provide background material.

Make the decision.

Voting – decision making by majority rule or consensus.

Source: www.boarddevelopment.org - Adapted from *Before-Advance Preparation for Meetings*

Developing a Good Agenda

Tool #6

Usually prepared by the chair of the meeting, the written agenda will guide discussion and decisions for the meeting. Its distribution prior to the meeting is critical in ensuring that participants are prepared and ready to contribute in a meaningful way.

In preparing an agenda:

- Review past minutes and consider items to come forward
- Confer with any staff and committee chairs
- Consult members about any other agenda items
- Allocate a period of time to each item
- Ensure person responsible for each item will be attending
- Circulate agenda

A good agenda:

- Relates to the mandate of the board – make sure the board is not spending time on what is really the work of staff or committees
- Items focus on action or decision making
- The purpose of each item is clearly stated
- A realistic time period should be set for each item

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Standard agenda items include:

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Meeting of the Sport Organization

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

AGENDA

- Call to Order/Welcome
- Review of Past Meeting Minutes
- Review of Agenda
- Directors Reports
- Committee Reports
- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Date of Next Meeting
- Adjournment

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Explanation of Motions

Tool #7

| Type of Motion | Purpose | Requires Seconders | Requires Discussion | Can be Amended | Vote Required |
|---|--|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|
| To table | To clear floor for more urgent business, set aside | Yes | No | No | Majority |
| To Amend | To improve motion | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |
| To refer to | To allow more careful committee consideration | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |
| To limit or extend discussion to certain time | To provide more or less time for discussion | Yes | No | No | 2/3 |
| To call for the vote | To end discussion immediately and vote | Yes | No | No | 2/3 |
| To raise a question or privilege | To bring up an urgent matter due to undesirable conditions | No | No | No | Majority |
| To recess | To secure a rest | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |
| To adjourn | To end the meeting | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
| To rise to a point of order | To enforce rules or call attention to rule violation | No | No | No | Majority |
| To appeal ruling made by chair | To determine attitude of assembly on ruling made by chair | Yes | Yes | No | Majority |
| To suspend rules temporarily | To allow special action not possible within the rules | Yes | No | No | 2/3 |
| To withdraw motion | To prevent vote or inclusion in minutes | No | No | No | Majority |
| To object to consideration of a motion | To prevent vote or inclusion in minutes | No | No | No | 2/3 |
| To rescind | To repeal motion discussion | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |
| To ratify | To approve previous action taken | Yes | Yes | Yes | 2/3 |
| To postpone definitely to a certain time | To allow more informal discussion time to obtain support | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
| To open nominations | To allow nominations to be made again | Yes | No | Yes | Majority |
| To postpone indefinitely | To prevent vote on the question or to suppress | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |

Source: *Conducting Effective Meetings*, a publication of the Organization Development Program, Culture and Recreation Division, Government of Saskatchewan