

# RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Do you dread attending meetings because they are dull, unproductive, disorganized and too long? With proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and enjoyable. 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. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will "run smooth."

The following are some tips to help you make your next meeting successful, productive and even fun.

## ***Before the Meeting***

1. Define the purpose of the meeting.
2. Develop an agenda with the officers and advisor.
3. Distribute the agenda and circulate background material, lengthy documents or articles prior to the meeting so members will be prepared and feel involved and up-to-date.
4. Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it, if possible.  
Remember, members have other commitments. They will be more likely to attend meetings if you make them productive, predictable and as short as possible.
5. If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other, i.e., a circle or semi-circle. For large groups, try U-shaped rows.
6. Choose a location suitable to your group's size. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. A larger room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression.
7. Use visual aids for interest (e.g., posters, diagrams, etc.). Post a large agenda up front to which members can refer.
8. Vary meeting places if possible to accommodate different members. Be sure everyone knows where and when the next meeting will be held.

## ***During the Meeting***

1. Greet members and make them feel welcome, even late members when appropriate.
2. If possible, serve light refreshments; they are good icebreakers and make your members feel special and comfortable.
3. Start on time. End on time.
4. Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
5. Stick to the agenda.
6. Encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members; they will feel that attending meetings is worth their while.
7. Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision making process.



8. Keep conversation focused on the topic. Feel free to ask for only constructive and non-repetitive comments. Tactfully end discussions when they are getting nowhere or becoming destructive or unproductive.
9. Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference in case a question or problem arises.
10. As a leader, be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation and confidence in members. Admit mistakes.
11. Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, have members volunteer thoughts of things they feel have been good or successful or reiterate the organization's mission.
12. Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

### ***After the Meeting***

1. Write up and distribute minutes within 3 or 4 days. Quick action reinforces importance of meeting and reduces errors of memory.
2. Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
3. Follow-up on delegation decisions. See that all members understand and carry-out their responsibilities.
4. Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
5. Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
6. Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings. Note any areas that can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings. A sample meeting evaluation checklist is attached.



# MEETING EVALUATION CHECKLIST

## The Meeting was Well Planned

- Members were notified in advance
- There was a pre-arranged agenda
- Officers and committees were ready to report
- The meeting room was pre-arranged

## The Meeting was Well Organized

- The meeting started on time
- Guests were introduced and welcomed
- Agendas were available for all members
- The purposes for the meeting were made clear
- There was a transition from the last meeting
- One topic was discussed at a time
- One person has the floor at a time
- Discussion was relevant
- The chairperson summarized the main points of the discussion
- The meeting moved along at a workable pace
- Committee assignments were complete and clear
- Plans for the next meeting were announced
- All that was planned for the meeting was covered

## Participation in the Meeting

- Members participated in discussion and voting
- The chairperson made good use of questions
- The pros and cons of all issues were considered
- Members gave suggestions to committees
- Responsibilities were evenly distributed
- Members participated in planning the agenda for the next meeting

## The Value of the Meeting

- Progress was made toward goals
- Something was learned

## Attitude of the Meeting

- Attendance was good
- Everyone present was on time
- Members knew one another
- There was a "warm up" period before the meeting
- There was some humor during the meeting
- Members and officers helped one another when needed
- There was an atmosphere of free expression

