

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS

Meetings are an inevitable and necessary part of any club or organization. If you work at it, your meetings can be fun, interesting, productive, and contribute a great deal to the spirit of your group. At their worst, meetings can be dull, unproductive, an ego trip for leaders, and thus a big factor in member apathy. These tips should help you to make your club meetings be the best that they can be!

TIPS ON RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Before The Meeting:

1. Determine the *purpose* of the meeting

- reasons for having the meeting
- what you specifically want to accomplish during the meeting

2. Make arrangements for the *date, time, and place of meeting*

- be conscious of mid-terms, other major events that may conflict
- reserve meeting space (can reserve a room for whole quarter at once for weekly meetings)
the meeting space should be somewhere where everyone can be seated comfortably and where interruptions are kept to a minimum
- make arrangements for equipment needs and any guest speakers
- notify people about the meeting-notices to members, fliers, banners, newsletter articles, e-mail notices, etc. (*include date, time, place, any significant agenda items, . . .*).

3. Develop an *agenda* and make copies for the meeting (or have one large agenda in room)

- meet with other officers and adviser beforehand to plan agenda items
 - solicit input from group members about the agenda
- send the agenda out to members before the meeting if possible
- include time allotments beside each agenda item if appropriate
- a *sample club meeting agenda is shown below* (yours will vary, but can use this as a base)

_____ Club Meeting Agenda

Date

- Call to order-attendance
 - introduction of any newcomers/visitors
- Opening comments
- Approval of last meeting's minutes
- Officer/Chairperson reports
- Committee reports
- Old, unfinished business (can list topics)
- New business (can list topics)
- Discussion items
- Announcements/open items
- Closing remarks (reminder of specific tasks to be completed before next meeting)
- Adjournment, reminder of next meeting time and place

During The Meeting - What A Good Chairperson Should Know

1. Meeting Environment - Set up the meeting place before the meeting and be prepared for group members before they arrive. Try to avoid crowded seating, poor lighting, and intruding noise. You may want to have members sit in a circle so everyone has good eye contact and so people don't get stuck hidden in corners of the room.

2. Distribute Agenda - Distribute the agenda to people as they arrive, if they weren't already given out before the meeting. Agendas can also be written on a chalkboard/whiteboard or newsprint. The whole purpose of an agenda is to save time and keep the meeting on course. Don't waste time by digressing from the agenda without good reason.

3. Start The Meeting On Time - Starting late rewards the stragglers, punishes those who do arrive on time, and creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, in addition to wasting valuable time.

4. Roles - Make sure group members have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They should know what is expected of them and should not encounter any surprises during the meeting. Let everyone who has an agenda item know that they will be expected to give a report. As the group leader, be in control but not in an authoritarian position of power over the group.

5. Know Names - Knowing the names of your group members is a good way of allaying anxieties and providing a feeling of belonging. As a leader, be sure you know names of group members, and help them to know one another's names (i.e., teambuilders, introduce new members, . . .).

6. Format - Make your organizational and meeting process "ground rules" clear to members. Two books about parliamentary procedure are available in the Leadership Library in Viking Union 425.

7. Listening - Participants should actively listen to each other and no one's ideas should be discounted. The leader should make sure that participants do not interrupt each other and that nobody dominates the meeting unless it is appropriate for one to do so. In this way, participants are able to contribute fully and the full potential of the group is realized.

8. Time Frame - Time should be used well; avoid wheel-spinning/repetition and irrelevant points. Meetings are most successful when they are in the area of one hour in length as far as the attention span of group members. Direct the discussion away from trivia and toward concrete issues, ideas or topics. Prevent general hubbub-when everyone talks at once, no one is truly heard.

9. Minutes - Be sure that someone is responsible for taking minutes. A good recording system will enable you to refresh your memory concerning decisions made and will save you a lot of time. The recording, publication, and distribution of minutes is a good tool to use for follow-up.

10. Avoid "killer" phrases - Be wary of 7 killer phrases that can lead to group stagnation: "We've never done it that way," "We tried that once before," "We're doing alright without it," "It costs too much," "That's not our responsibility," "It just won't work," and "We're not ready for that."

11. Attitude - Believe in your organization and its members. The only limits are those you impose. Don't apologize for asking people for their time and energy, but also remember that they are volunteers. Enthusiasm is infectious, and very necessary, as is humor. Encourage creativity!

12. Accomplishment - Meetings can be relaxed and casual, but must be productive. A sense of movement is essential; interest lags when action lags.

13. *Involvement* - Get as much participation as you can. Delegate when appropriate. Be aware of group dynamics and non-verbal cues of members. Let committees handle details - make major decisions at meetings. The more you expect from people, the more you get. If members feel a sense of ownership, they are more likely to stay.

14. *Summarize* - Summarize what has been discussed and decided when necessary.

15. *Avoid Arguments* - Never argue with or criticize a participant in the meeting. Ask questions if you disagree. Let the group members make a decision (unless there is a violation of policy or law involved). Keep control of the meeting without stifling free comment. Invite constructive criticism and disagreement. Clarify issues by obtaining a consensus, then move on.

16. *Make Meetings Enjoyable and Fun!* Following are some ideas for theme meetings that can liven up your meetings - you can brainstorm hundreds more of them!

Hat Night - everyone wears their favorite hat and tells why it's their favorite

Tie Night - everyone wears a tie

Stuffed Animal Night - everyone brings their favorite stuffed animal and tells why

Food Night - everyone brings some type of food that describes them

Joke Night - everyone tells a joke

Bathrobe Night - everyone wears their bathrobe

Hula Hawaii Night - everyone wears their beachwear

Hot Mug Night - everyone brings a mug and have hot cocoa during the meeting

Shades Night - everyone wears their favorite sunglasses

17. *Praise in Public, Criticize in Private* - Praise people for their efforts and accomplishments in public. If you need to provide constructive criticism to a member, be sure to do it in private after the meeting. Do not criticize or lecture a member in front of the group.

18. *Feedback* - Ask group members for honest, constructive comments to improve meetings.

19. *Trust and Respect* - Most of all, be sure to role model and encourage a high level of trust and respect among group members.

After The Meeting

1. *Evaluate Meeting* - Talk with the other officers to determine whether you fulfilled your goals and whether there are any concerns or issues to address before the next meeting.

2. *Follow-up* - Follow-up with members during the week to make sure that assigned tasks are understood and being accomplished and to see if there are any questions.

3. *Attendance Requirements* - If your club has attendance requirements, enforce them. Follow-up with those people who are not showing up consistently.

4. *Minutes* - Be sure that minutes are distributed in a timely manner.

If you want to learn more about how to run effective meetings, the Leadership Library in Viking Union 425 has many books about meeting skills available for check-out.

The level of success of any organization is determined by the level of success of each individual within that organization.