

Running an Effective Meeting

Planning and preparation is the key to leading an effective group meeting. We have provided some tips to help make your next meeting successful, productive, and fun.

BEFORE THE MEETING:

1. Define the purpose of the meeting. If you can't come up with a purpose, don't have a meeting!
2. Develop an agenda with the officers and advisor. Below is a sample agenda:
(View Sample Agenda)
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. 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. A leader has a better view when s/he is centrally located.
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. Post a large agenda up front for members to refer to.
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 ones when appropriate.
2. If possible, serve light refreshments, they are good ice breakers 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 worthwhile.
7. Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact in the decision-making process.
8. Keep conversation on topic toward an eventual decision. 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 (see handout on "Minutes and Record Keeping").
10. Leader, be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation, and confidence in members. Admit mistakes.
11. Have a positive attitude, members will reflect the attitude you model.
12. Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, have members volunteer thoughts of things they feel are good, successful, reciting a group's creed or a good of the order.
13. Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING:

1. Write up and distribute minutes within 2 or 3 days. Quick action reinforces importance of meeting and reduces error of memory.
2. Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
3. Follow-up on delegating 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. Weak areas can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings.

Once your organization has written its goals and objectives, it is time to take this task one step further by developing an Action Plan. This is the actual mapping out in detail of what is to get done within a time framework.

- What is to be done - your objective?
- How will it be accomplished?
- What are the resources in terms of people, money, materials?
- Who is responsible for completing each task?
- When will it be accomplished?
- How will you know when it is accomplished? How will you measure success?

Example of an Action Plan:

1. Goal: To improve membership, recruitment, retention and involvement.
2. An Objective: This will be accomplished when a committee structure has been developed whose purpose is to increase member involvement to at least 40% by next term.
3. How: Brainstorm ideas to increase member involvement. Go over this list and weed out all those ideas that are impractical or impossible to do.
4. Resources: Members, executive officers, Student Activities Staff, handouts on recruitment, motivation, delegation.
5. Who: Leadership and consultants.
6. When: By next term (try to set a specific date if possible).
7. Results:
 - Acceptable - membership involvement increases by 40-70%.
 - Unacceptable - membership involvement increases by less than 40%.
 - Better than expected - membership involvement increases by more than 70%.

Source:

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