

# **RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS**

Do you dread attending meetings because they are dull, unproductive, disorganized, and too long? If so, you could be suffering from “meetingitis”. Don’t worry though, because with proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and fun.

Organizational meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives (see handout on Organizational Goal Setting and Action Planning) and keep you updated on current events. They provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive. 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 itself.” The following tips may help make your next meeting successful, productive, and even 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:

- \* Call to Order
- \* Approval of Agenda
- \* Correction and Approval of Minutes
- \* Public Forum
- \* Reports:
  - Executive Officer Reports
  - Treasurer’s Report
  - Club Reports
  - Committee Reports
  - Advisor Reports
- \* Unfinished Business
- \* New Business
- \* Announcements
- \* Adjournment

### BEFORE THE MEETING (Cont.):

3. Distribute and post the agenda (preferably 72 hours in advance) 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 during the meeting.
8. Vary meeting places, if possible, to accommodate different members. Be sure everyone knows when and where the next meeting will be held.

### DURING THE MEETING:

1. Greet members and make them feel welcome, even those who are late (when appropriate).
2. If possible, serve light refreshments. They are good ice breakers and make your members feel special and comfortable.
3. Start the meeting on time, and end it on time.
4. Review the agenda, and set priorities for the meeting.
5. Stick to the agenda.
6. Encourage group discussion to cover all points of view and ideas presented. This will help create better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members. Members will feel that attending meetings is worthwhile.

*DURING THE MEETING (CONT.):*

7. Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improves when members see their impact in the decision-making process.
8. Keep conversation on topic and toward an eventual decision. Feel free to ask for only constructive and non-repetitive comments. Tactfully end discussions when they are leading 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. Leaders should be role models. This is done by listening, expressing 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 their thoughts on things they feel are good, or successful, or recite a group’s creed for the good of the order.
12. Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

*AFTER THE MEETING:*

1. Write up and distribute minutes within 3-4 days. Quick action reinforces importance of the meeting and reduces errors of memory.
2. Discuss any problems, with other officers, that came up during the meeting. Come up with ways improvements can be made.
3. Follow up on delegated decisions and responsibilities. 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. Periodically, conduct an evaluation of the meetings. Weak areas can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings.

## ACTION PLAN:

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 needs to be done within a time framework.

- What is to be done – Your objective?
- How will it be accomplished?  
What resources are needed in terms of people, money and materials?
- Who is responsible for completing each task?
- When will it be accomplished?
- How will you know when it is accomplished? How will it be measured?

### Example of an Action Plan:

1. **Goal:** To improve club membership, recruitment, retention, and involvement.
2. **Objective:** This will be accomplished when a committee structure has been developed and whose purpose it is to increase member involvement
3. **How:** Brainstorming ideas to increase member involvement. Then, go over the list and weed out ideas that are impractical or impossible to accomplish.
4. **Resources:** Members, executive officers, Student Activities Office, handouts on recruitment, motivation, delegation.
5. **Who:** Executive board and consultants; advisors.
6. **When:** By next term (try to set a specific date when 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%.

Original Sources: Student Organization Development Center (University of Michigan; 1999)  
Dean of Students Office (California State Univ. of Fullerton; 1999)

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