

RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Student Organization Development Center

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Do you dread attending meetings because they are dull, unproductive, disorganized and too long? Well, you could be suffering from "meetingitis". But don't worry, 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 updated on current events. They 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 itself". The following are some tips to 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
Announcements
Treasurer's Report
Committee Reports
Unfinished Business
New Business
Special Issues
Adjournment

- 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 better control 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.

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- 7) Use visual aids for interest e.g., posters, diagrams, etc. 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 worth their while.
- 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 no where 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) 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 or successful, reciting a group's creed, or a 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 or 4 days. Quick action reinforces importance of meeting and reduces error of