Running Fun and Effective Meetings

Overview

Do you dread attending meetings because they are dull, unproductive, disorganized, and too long? Well, you could be suffering from "meeting-itis." But don't worry; with proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and fun.

Purpose

Fun and effective meetings…
- Give your members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives and keep updated on current events.
- Provide a chance to communicate and keep your group cohesive.
- Allow your organization 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.

Materials Needed

1. Computer with word processing software and a printer
2. Back up materials and equipment for various agenda items (charts, reports, poster board, overhead materials, overhead projector, AV equipment).

Time needed

Advance preparation is crucial to developing a fun and effective meeting. Preparing at least a month in advance to your meeting will ensure that you have the appropriate materials at your meeting. Additionally, utilize your preparation time to obtain your members feedback on the meeting agenda.

Activity

Before the meeting…

1. Define the purpose of the meeting. If you cannot come up with a purpose, don't have a meeting!

2. Develop an agenda with officers and the advisor. Below is a sample agenda:
> Call to Order
> Approval of Agenda and Additions
> Corrections and Approval of Minutes to Prior Meeting
> Announcements
> Treasurer's Report
> Committee Reports
> Old Business
> New Business
> Special Issues
> Action Summary
> Announcement of Next Meeting
> 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.
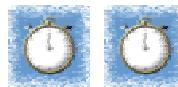
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4. Choose an appropriate meeting time and announce it well in advance. Set a time limit and stick to it. Remember, members have other commitments. They will be more likely to attend meetings if you make them productive, predictable and as short as possible.

5. If possible, arrange your meeting room so that members face each other, i.e., a circle or semi-circle. A conference table is best. For large groups, try U-shaped rows. Leaders have better control when they are 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. Use visual aids for interest, e.g., posters, diagrams, etc. Post a large agenda up front for members to refer to.

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 discussion on the 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.

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, if attendees number fewer than ten, 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 memory.

2. Discuss any problems during the next meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
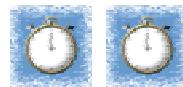
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3. Follow up on delegation decisions. See that all members understand and carry-out their respective responsibilities. (Create link to delegating tips here)

4. Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress. (Create link to recognition tips here)

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.