Effective Committees

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Disclosures

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Objectives

• Describe the traits of an effective committee chair
• Describe the components of a well-run meeting
Why Committees?

1. Carry out work of the organization
2. Represent, involve, and serve members
3. Provide training ground for future leaders of the organization
Types of committees

- Ad-hoc
- Standing
Effective Committees

1. Clear, written purpose
2. Effective committee chair
3. Thoughtfully appointed members
4. Well-run meetings
What is a Committee?
A group of men who individually can do nothing but as a group decide that nothing can be done.

Anon
The unfit trying to lead the unwilling to do the unnecessary.

Anon
A group of people who talk for hours to produce a result called minutes.

A. D., quoted in READER'S DIGEST, 5/76.
A group that keeps minutes and loses hours.

Milton Berle
Committee Definition – Purpose

- Scope
- Authority
- Specific tasks/responsibilities
- Report to Board or Executive Committee
- Members – how chosen, terms
- Budget/other resources
Traits of Committee Chair

- Content knowledge and relevant experience necessary
- Proven leadership and people skills more important
Committee Chair

- Not necessarily the technical expert
- Works well with others
- Organizes effectively
- Motivates others
- Keeps people on task
- Good communication skills
Responsibilities of Chair

- Prepare and present committee reports
- Groom a successor
- Set agendas
- Call meetings
- Allow all members opportunity to contribute
- Assign responsibilities and follow up
• Recruit members
• Orient new members
• Report to Board or Executive Committee
• Be familiar with goals of organization and its by-laws
• Communicate with members
• Praise member contributions
Chair Does NOT...

- Talk the most at meetings
- Make all the decisions
- Allow one or more people to dominate the meeting
- Cut people out of discussions
- Allow meetings to become unproductive
- Make people feel foolish or useless
- Force people to contribute to discussion
- Lose temper
- Stay too long
Committee Membership

• Volunteers – match needs of committee to skills and interest of members
• Communicate expectations up front
• Number depends on amount and nature of committee’s work
• Valuable tool for developing and testing new leadership, while cultivating a deeper level of commitment to the organization
"This is the last time I volunteer to serve on the building committee!"
"To get something done, a committee should consist of no more than three people, two of whom are absent"

Robert Copeland
• Include all important constituents
• Staff liaison support
• Convenient posting of committee roster with term dates
A man was asked to serve on the reception committee for an evening fundraising dinner. He ordinarily wouldn’t attend what he thought would be a long and boring affair. Because he was asked to be on the committee, he agreed to attend. He was told that he would be receiving a scarlet ribbon to wear, indicating that he was on the reception committee. When he arrived at the dinner he saw 700 other people wearing a scarlet ribbon.
Committee Meetings

• Great committee meetings don’t just happen
Are you lonely?
Tired of working on your own?
Do you hate making decisions?

HOLD A MEETING!

You can —
• See people
• Show charts
• Feel important
• Point with a stick
• Eat donuts
• Impress your colleagues

All on company time!

MEETINGS
THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK
Describe a BAD Committee Meeting Experience
• Didn’t start on time
• Didn’t end on time
• Nothing was accomplished
• I didn’t know anyone at the table
• Didn’t follow agenda
Effective Meetings

• Set dates in advance
• Send reminders
• Send agenda with supporting documents
• Talk to members prior to meeting to gain consensus
• Choose a convenient, appropriately sized location with a chair for everyone
• Provide introductions
• Start and end on time
• Focus discussion
• Follow Robert’s Rules of Order
Agenda

- Title of meeting
- Date, time, and location
- Approval of prior meeting minutes
- Reports from sub-groups
- Old business
- New business
- Announcements
- Date, time and location of next meeting
Send Agenda With Supporting Documents
“The meeting’s at 10. I’ll send you a copy of the agenda, the hidden agenda and your personal agenda.”
AGENDA

10:00-10:30: Tedium
10:30-11:00: Finger Pointing
11:00-11:30: Important-looking button pushing on various mobile devices
11:30: Lunch

"Okay if that's all the finger pointing we have today, we can move on!"
Consent Agenda

• Reports for informational purpose only
• Approval by members
Member Responsibilities at Meeting

- Prepare
- Report absence in advance
- Listen
- Speak up
- Ask questions
- Consider all options and share views
- Abide by decisions made, whether agreeing or not
WE ARE A COMMITTEE OF CLOCKS, YOU IDIOT. WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU FORGOT TO RECORD THE MINUTES...?
Minutes

• Legal document
• Keep accurate records; avoid unnecessary information
• Any meeting where people vote
• Prepare as soon as possible after meeting
Minutes Items

• Title of meeting
• Date, time, and location
• People present, excused, absent
• Corrections to previous meeting minutes
• Actions relating to previous meeting
• All motions and outcomes of votes
• Items to be discussed and decided
• Date, time and location of next meeting
NOT to Include in Minutes...

• Names of people who move and second motions
• Details of debates
• Facts of what is said; only include what is done
• Vote count – outcome is enough
BEFORE WE BEGIN, I'LL READ OUT THE MINUTES FROM OUR LAST MEETING....

"BANG, KABOOM, BOOM, BANG BANG, RATTLE OF SMALL ARMS FIRE, RICOCHET, BANG, THOOM, BOOM, MUFFLED WHOOMPH, THROUMM, BANG...."
"Okay, let the minutes show we're not absconding with the money until the economy improves..."
A committee can be a very effective working force of an organization if the committee has a clear, written purpose; the committee chair is chosen based on leadership and people skills; members are chosen to align committee needs with member skills and interest; members are chosen strategically to develop new leadership for the organization; and committee meetings are conducted efficiently.