

GUIDELINES FOR CHAIRING A COMMITTEE MEETING

The success you achieve as chair of the committee will depend largely on your ability to preside and guide the meetings of the committee to a definite goal. The following guidelines should assist you in reaching that goal.

- **Begin and end the meeting on time!**
- Work from a **written agenda that includes a statement of the purpose/reason for the meeting**. Include your committee's charge on the agenda. This way, your discussions are better able to stay focused.
- Review the committee's objectives relative to the objectives of the association.
- Be certain committee members receive all information relating to issues on the agenda, both pro and con. Try to get information to members prior to the meeting.
- Keep a low profile while taking charge of the direction of the meeting. Ask questions or bring up ideas to stimulate discussion and motivate interest.
- **Keep the meeting moving**...*interest lags when action lags*. Get as much participation as possible. Keep responses short, get to the point.
- Speak clearly. If you can't be heard, you can't exercise control.
- Insist on order. You may find it helpful to always use proper parliamentary procedure as a means for maintaining order.
- Talk to the group, not to individuals.
- If you have a member who is disruptive or monopolizes the conversation, take a short break and speak with that person. Enlist them to help you listen to others, take notes, etc. This makes the person feel important to the process, but also allows others to participate.
- Make sure each person taking the floor speaks clearly. Sum up what the speaker has said, entertain discussion, and obtain a decision.
- Control discussion that appears to be going nowhere by recommending further study and identifying members who will work on a study.
- Retain control, but don't stifle free comment. Invite constructive criticism and even disagreement. Ask for support. Clarify issues by obtaining a consensus, then move on.
- Don't argue with the individual who has the floor. Ask questions if you disagree, but remember, as presiding officer, you should remain neutral.
- If you have a comment, ask for the floor as a participant.
- Ensure that adequate minutes are kept of each meeting and that they are distributed to each committee member. *Ask your vice chair or another member to take minutes*. As chair, you will find it difficult to chair the meeting, facilitate discussion and take minutes all at the same time.
- Check at the end of the meeting to see if members feel that all relevant subjects have been adequately covered. If you're out of time and a topic has not been discussed, assure your members that it will appear on the next agenda...and be certain it does.
- Thank members for their participation.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The role a committee member plays is an important one. The success of the committee depends on the contributions made by each of its members. Consider the following suggestions as you approach your role in committee participation.

- Study the agenda carefully before you come to the meeting. Ask for clarification if any items are unclear.
- Stick to the agenda during the meeting. Bring up new business only at the appropriate time.
- Determine what the exact purpose of the meeting is and decide in advance how and what you will contribute to it.
- Keep your replies short and to the point.
- Speak in a voice everyone can hear. Wait until you have the attention of all the committee members before you begin your remarks. The presiding officer should ensure that a desirable atmosphere exists.
- Speak to the entire group.
- Repeat remarks if you think they weren't heard.
- If you disagree with the speaker, make your comments at the proper time. If you have a comment, ask for the floor rather than joining in aimless group discussion. If what you have to say is a genuine contribution and really does make a difference, don't let it get lost in confused conversation.
- There may be dissenters on some subjects. Ask them to summarize their convictions in a direct statement. This permits a more thorough examination of an idea that could be highly constructive when completely understood.
- Hurriedly passed motions usually don't receive the consideration they deserve. Better to table them until the next meeting, when they can be discussed in detail, than to pass a motion you might later regret.

(Source: Getting Involved: The Challenge of Committee Participation, published by the American Society of Association Executives)