



ECSU Student Center and Student Activities Office *Co-curricular education for student organizational leadership*

← **RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING** →

We all dread attending meetings if we know that they are going to be boring, unproductive, or will last too long. The keys to running an effective meeting are planning carefully and having a solid objective for the meeting.

Meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss goals and objectives, 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. Start with careful planning, finish with a thorough follow-up, and the meeting will almost run itself. Here are some steps to keep in mind to make sure your meeting will be successful and productive.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- ◆ Define the purpose of the meeting. If you can't come up with a purpose, don't have a meeting.
- ◆ Develop an agenda with officers and advisor.
- ◆ Distribute the agenda and any background material or articles prior to the meeting so members can come prepared and feel involved.
- ◆ Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it. Remember that members have other commitments.
- ◆ Arrange the room so that members face each other (i.e., a circle or semicircle).
- ◆ Choose a location suitable to group size. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. A larger room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression.
- ◆ Be sure everyone knows where and when the meeting will be held; if possible, hold meetings at the same time and place each week.
- ◆ Use visual aids, such as posters, for interest.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Call to order

Correction and approval of
last week's minutes

Announcements

Committee reports

Unfinished business

New business

Special issues

Announcements

Adjournment

DURING THE MEETING

- ◆ Greet members and make them feel welcome, even the late ones.
- ◆ If possible, serve light refreshments; they make your members feel welcome and comfortable.

- ◆ Start on time. End on time.
- ◆ Stick to the agenda.
- ◆ Encourage group discussions to get all viewpoints and ideas. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members.
- ◆ Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities, and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision-making process. Members need to see that their input is important.
- ◆ Keep the conversation on topic toward an eventual decision.
- ◆ Delegate responsibilities and establish due dates. Give members a voice in decision-making.
- ◆ Keep minutes of the meeting.
- ◆ Be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation, and confidence in members. Admit your mistakes.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Set a date, time, and place for the next meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING

- ◆ Write up and distribute minutes within 2 or 3 days. Send copies of the minutes to those who did not attend the meeting and those who are interested in joining your organization. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting and reduces error of memory.
- ◆ Discuss any problems that occurred during the meeting with other officers; come up with improvements that can be made.
- ◆ Follow-up on delegated tasks. See that members understand and carry out their responsibilities.
- ◆ Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- ◆ Above all, give recognition and appreciation to members for excellent and timely progress!

Remember, if your meetings are too long, unorganized, and boring, your members will probably lose interest and not attend any meetings. By following these suggested steps, you will find that meetings don't have to be dull. You will also find that both you and your members will get more accomplished!

RELATED SAO RESOURCES

- ◆ Art of Delegating
- ◆ Brainstorming
- ◆ Motivating Members
- ◆ Parliamentary Procedure
- ◆ Planning a Retreat

REFERENCE

Adapted from: St. Norbert College, Department of Leadership, Service & Involvement

*Additional resource handouts are available as well as consultation services.
For more information, contact the Student Activities Office in the Student Center at 465-4450.*