



Useful Skills and Techniques for Chairing Committee Meetings

Use the GOALS Approach to Prepare Your Agenda

1. **G = Goals:** Goals are the results that you want from your meeting. They are the deliverables from people in the meeting and the reason you called the meeting. Write out your goals for the meeting. They should be so clear and complete that someone else could run the meeting based on what you wrote.
2. **O = Outcomes:** Outcomes state the benefits of achieving the goal, indicating why you called the meeting. Outcomes are useful because they motivate people to find solutions. They address what will happen, why it will happen, and how it will happen. Outcomes also help you see what will happen if you do something *or* do nothing.
3. **A = Activities:** The list of activities is the blueprint or instructions for your meeting. It tells what activities will occur, who is responsible for each, and the time allotted for each. You could give this list to someone else and that person could run the meeting.
4. **L = Logistics:** Logistics provide people with information they need to succeed in a meeting. This includes location of the meeting (e.g., the room number and directions or a map if appropriate), what to bring (e.g., laptop, copies of reports), and how to prepare (e.g., bring five ideas on how to get more sisters involved, upcoming community involvement, upcoming political campaigns).
5. **S = Strategy:** Meet with key participants to assess their support or opposition for issues on the agenda. Uncover obstacles to progress and resolve them before the meeting. This can include inconvenient starting times, uncomfortable room conditions, absent participants, missing materials, and faulty equipment. If presentations are to be given, make sure they contribute to your meeting. Check the emotional climate. Sometimes a major event leaves people too upset to focus on the issues.

Set Ground Rules for Your Meetings

1. Establish the practice of starting and ending meetings on time.
2. Create an agenda and follow it. This keeps you and the participants focused on the issues.
3. Allow one speaker at a time. Set a time limit on how long each person will speak. Require participants to raise hands to be recognized.
4. Require cell phones to be set to off, vibrate, or silence.
5. Do not allow outside conversations while someone is speaking.
6. Respect others and be supportive of each other at all times.
7. Do not allow others to use rank (hierarchy) in the room.

Share Responsibilities and Involve Others

1. Strive to work as a team. Make sure everyone is involved. The more people are involved, the more committed they will be.
2. Ask for volunteers. This gives others the opportunity to feel as though they are part of the team.
3. Operate on consensus, which includes general agreements everyone can accept.
4. Share time so that everyone participates, not just one or two people.
5. Reach out to all participants. Sometimes you have to call on someone by first name to get them involved and share their thoughts.
6. If the meeting date or time has to be changed, schedule it to accommodate the majority of participants.

Be a Leader and Role Model

1. Take control of the meeting if needed. Before the meeting begins, explain what will be discussed. Also, explain what will not be discussed, if appropriate. When participants get off track, refer back to the agenda to get on track.
2. Share all relevant information. Secrecy portrays dishonesty and causes dissent among participants. Examples are upcoming job opportunities or positions being advertised in your Council or Local.
3. Model the behavior you expect from others. Display good character and professionalism at all times.
4. Let participants know their ideas are appreciated. For example, you can open a meeting by saying, "I believe all your ideas are important in making this meeting successful."
5. Maintain a sense of humor at all times; smile. The impact works wonders.
6. Familiarize yourself with Robert's Rules of Order (optional when conducting a meeting).

Be Friendly and Welcoming in Your Communications

1. Create a friendly and welcoming environment. A productive meeting occurs in an environment where participants feel free to explore new ideas, speak openly, and ask questions. For example, suggest participants arrive a few minutes early to get to know each other and share refreshments.
2. Allow time for open discussions to encourage new ideas, offer input, and address concerns.
3. Use first names to build relationships. For example, the use of name tags or name tent holders can ensure everyone is addressed properly.
4. Open your meeting with introductions. This lets participants get to know each other better and recognizes new participants.
5. Be an active listener and know your audience. You must fully understand what people are saying, why they are saying it, and how they feel. The key is to simply pay attention.
6. Ask open-ended questions to stimulate ideas. These questions start with “how” and “what.” For example, “How do you think we might...” or “What ideas do you suggest to...”
7. Be a clear communicator. Use terms that are easily understood by everyone and explain new terms. If there is a language barrier, ask for a volunteer to translate so no one feels left out.
8. If you are not clear about what someone has said, verify. Ask the person to repeat what was said. Another option is for you to repeat what the person said and ask whether you understood.
9. Do not interrupt. Wait until the person finishes speaking.

Manage Differences Diplomatically

1. Deal with disagreements diplomatically and professionally. This protects egos and creates a productive environment that keeps people participating in the meeting.
2. Verify the meaning of contrary or opposing statements before evaluating and reacting. Do this by first repeating what the person said, then asking if the statement repeated was correct.
3. Try to determine the reason for the disagreement. Ask questions. For example, “Why do you think this will not work?” or “Why do you feel that way?”
4. Ask the person disagreeing for other ideas. For example, “What other ideas do you think might be better?” or “What else do you think we should do?”

5. Look for signs that tell you when it is time to move the discussion forward:
 - a. Agreement: Everyone likes the idea (or what has been said) and is ready to move on.
 - b. Understanding: Everyone fully understands the idea (or what has been said) and there are no further questions or comments.
6. Look for signs that tell you when more discussion is needed:
 - a. Disagreement: Some people do not support an idea or disagree with what was said.
 - b. Misunderstanding: Some people make comments that indicate confusion or a lack of clarity. Some people ask new or different questions that need to be answered.
7. When someone is speaking, watch the other participants. Their reactions will reveal agreement or disagreement.
8. Strive for solutions, not debates. Be open to new ideas. Ask for input and allow others to share in the decision-making.