

# Committees

## What is a Committee?

Committees are the backbone of the organization. They provide for careful study and analysis that allow the organization to make the correct and final decision.

## Committee Types

1. Permanent Committee - Formed to handle work that is a regular, major part of the organization's function.
2. Temporary Committee (sometimes called task forces or ad-hoc committees) - Formed for a project or task that is only a one-time deal. Make sure the project really requires a committee.

## Advantages of Committees:

1. A small group can consider, plan, and carry out an assignment more effectively than a large, unwieldy organization. It can meet more often, deliberate more efficiently, and work more rapidly.
2. Greater freedom of discussion, more informal procedure. Delicate, troublesome, or embarrassing questions are more easily handled.

**Effective committees do not just happen - they are a combination of good purpose, a good leader, and good members.**

## Good Purpose

Nothing ruins a committee's efforts like the lack of a meaningful purpose. Without a clearly stated, reasonable set of goals, the committee will not have the focus it needs to be successful. Some organizations suffer from too many committees.

## Good Leader

The primary duty of the leader is to guide the group's discussions. He/she should encourage every member to participate in the meetings and keep track of the discussion, focusing on the matter at hand.

## Qualifications for Leader (Chairperson) of Committee

1. Good discussion leader who can coordinate ideas and energy.
2. Understands committee assignments and is committed to it.
3. Knowledge and experience is essential for some projects.
4. Willingness to devote necessary time to assignment.

## Method of Selection

1. The committee goal should be understood by the total membership before the chairperson is selected.
2. Group support is more forthcoming when the membership participates in the selection of the committee chair.
3. The method of selection should convey an attitude of importance and prestige. Do not ask for volunteers without the benefit of a good discussion of qualifications.

## **Suggestions for Leading a Committee**

1. The committee should set its own goals. Do not impose your goals. Goals should be decided on by the whole group in discussion.
2. All decisions should be made by the committee. Do not be tempted to make decisions for the group. Do not try to impose your standards on the group no matter how tempting it is.
3. Be informal. As far as possible, do away with voting and hand raising.
4. Be active. Set an atmosphere that encourages all to participate. Do little talking yourself. Ask questions. Accept opinions of all members without criticizing them.
5. Evaluate. Help the committee evaluate how it is doing, whether it is solving its problems, accomplishing its goals, etc.
6. Sit in a circle. Sit with the committee, not in front of the committee, at a separate table, etc.
7. Give all the facts to the committee. Have confidence in the committee. Do not keep any facts from the committee. Trust the committee to make the right decision.
8. Think and say "we" not "I" or "you." Think in terms of "our committee."

## **Good Members**

Committee members should be carefully selected. These are the people that will be solving problems for the entire organization. They should be somewhat knowledgeable in the area of the committee's responsibility. Members should be a diverse group without being incompatible. Try to get people with different opinions on the committee--when these people agree on a solution, the organization knows it is a good one.

Each member must feel that the work of the committee is important and that the organization will give attention to the committee's report. Committee members must have a sense of valuable participation and belonging, along with recognition for their work.

## **Making a Successful Committee**

1. Studies have found that the optimal size of a committee is around 4-6 people.
2. The committee should receive a clear statement of the problem, with limits if appropriate.
3. The committee should receive the date the project is due and the form it should take.
4. The committee should avoid minor details. A committee can get all wrapped up in a hassle over minor detail that need not be discussed in the committee meeting.

## **Handling Committee Reports**

Adopted - The organization binds itself to any opinions, conclusions, recommendations, or resolutions contained in the body of the report.

Filed - Received without commitment.

Postponed - To be considered at a later date.

Referred - To be studied by an executive officer or group.

Returned - Returned to committee because the report is incomplete or unfinished.

Rejected - Report is not acceptable.