

# Meeting Management

## Before the Meeting

- Define the purpose. If you cannot define the purpose, do not meet.
- Develop an agenda.
- Distribute the agenda, background information, lengthy documents or other material before the meeting so that members can come prepared.
- Choose an appropriate meeting time. Meetings too early or too late will not be productive. Set a time limit and stick to it. Members have other commitments. They will be more likely to attend meetings if the meetings are productive, have a purpose, and are to the point.
- If possible, arrange the room so members face each other. If the group is small, use a semi-circle or circle. If the group is large, use U-shaped rows. The leader will have better control if centrally located. When reserving a room in the Bowen-Thompson Student Union, the Union staff will arrange the room as you request.
- Have a location that is suitable to the group's size. A small room with too many people gets stuffy and creates tension.
- Use visual aids for interest.
- Be sure everyone knows when and where the meeting will be held.

## During the Meeting

- Start the meeting on time.
- Greet members to make them feel welcome.
- Serve refreshments if possible.
- Have icebreakers (energizers).
- Stick to the agenda.
- Encourage group discussion and feedback.
- Keep conversations focused on the topic.
- Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference and to distribute to members.
- Listen when members are talking.
- Give recognition and appreciation to those who deserve it.

## Concluding the Meeting

- Summarize agreements reached at the end of the meeting.
- Follow-up assignments. To help guarantee that action is taken on decisions, it is important to know:
  1. Who is responsible for carrying out the decision.
  2. What is to be done.
  3. How action is to be carried out.
  4. When the work should be completed.
- Tie up loose ends. Sometimes it is impossible to cover every item on the agenda. To avoid hasty decisions that may be regretted later, table unresolved issues until the next meeting.
- Plan the next meeting. Set the date and time. If possible, know the location for the next meeting.

## After the Meeting

- Write up and distribute minutes within two to three days.
- Discuss any problems during the meeting with officer(s) and advisor(s); brainstorm ideas for improvements.
- Follow up on delegated tasks. Make sure the person understands the responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meeting.

## **Things to Watch Out For in a Meeting**

- No clear, agreed upon agenda.
- Leaving the process of the meeting to fate. A meeting leader must facilitate, not wait for luck. Facilitating is helping the organization stay on track, on time, reaching for the goal, etc.
- Speeding off without a map. Where does this meeting fit in the overall plan for dealing with the issue? Take time for the planning process.
- Mixing purposes. One purpose at a time.
- Too many agenda items. Do not set your organization up for failure with too ambitious of an agenda.
- No mutual agreement on what the problem is.
- Jumping in with a solution
- Shifting focus. Stay on the same subject.
- Lack of visual helpers. Find a way for participants to follow the subject as the meeting proceeds.
- Unclear of incomplete action items or descriptions. Pin down the who, what, when, where, why, and how at the meeting.
- Missing key people.
- Meeting being dominated by one or two people.
- Not taking time to assure mutual understanding. Learn the issues facing other members. Explain your position.
- Uneven participation. Varying levels of understanding.
- Premature motions. Do not make a motion until the problem is adequately discussed and analyzed. If you are unable to agree on the problem, you probably are unable to agree on the solution.