How to Run Meetings

Myrna Newland, MD
James Newland, MD

Objectives

- List three reasons to have a meeting
- Give examples of traditional and modern methods of a meeting
- Describe preparation for a meeting
- Describe techniques for running meetings

Financial Statement

- We have no financial interest in this presentation whatsoever.

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Kinds of Meetings

- Traditional Face to Face
  - Informal: run by a chair
  - Formal: someone presides (e.g., Faculty senate
  - Workshops: Leader facilitates
  - Scientific session: moderator

Kinds of Meetings

- Modern meetings
  - Telephone conference
  - Meeting via internet
  - Interactive video

Reasons to Have a Meeting

- When issues must be discussed by a group
- When a vote is required for action to occur
- Organizational bylaws require a meeting
Is a Meeting Necessary?

• Don’t call a meeting just to inform people of things when a memo or email would suffice: there may be exceptions

Characteristics of a Good Chair

• Begin and start on time
• It is no sin to finish early!
• Always have an agenda
• Move it along!
• Keep the people focused
• Be fair to all

Characteristics of a Good Chair

• Make sure everybody participates
• If the meeting uses Robert’s Rules of Order, know the basics or have a parliamentarian. (e.g. Faculty Senate)

Characteristics of a Bad Chair

• Domineering
• No achievement: just runs
• Insecure, lazy: avoids decisions
• Ego Trip: The chairperson’s self-indulgence is the greatest barrier to the success of a meeting!

The Major Step in Being a Successful Chair

• Preparation!!!
• Preparation!!!
• Preparation!!!

Preparation

• Be Aware of the Environment
  - Check the room
  - Pick a round table, if possible
  - Projector and microphone work
  - Comfortable temperature
Preparation

• Agenda
  - Always have one!
  - If formal, give to participants ahead of time
  - Identify action items with responsible person
  - Most important topics go first

Sample Agendas

Anesthesia Faculty Meeting
Date; Time; Place
Persons attending
Items to be discussed
  - Bellevue update
  - Pre-op guidelines
  - Guest presentation

General Faculty Meeting
Date; Time; Place
Approval of minutes
Introduction of new faculty
Announcements
Reports
Approval of candidates for degrees
Open discussion/other business

Faculty Senate
Date; Time; Place
Approval of minutes
Announcements
Unfinished business
New Business
Reports
Open Discussion

Mentoring and Career Development
Date; Time; Place
Approval of minutes
Update: Research proposal
Update: Visiting professor
Review of noon luncheon topics
Discussion of new faculty orientation
Mentoring issues

Preparation

• Handouts, if needed, well before meeting!
• More than one handout: color code!
• Have extra handouts at meeting!
Preparation

• With a lot of material: use executive summaries
• Anticipate problems
  - Questions that might come up
  - Contentious items (e.g. budgets)
  - Absence of key persons

Audiovisuals

• Make sure the equipment works!
• Spare parts on hand or audiovisual support nearby
• PowerPoint is better than overheads or slides. Go mod!

Formal Meetings

• Use a consent agenda when appropriate
  - Procedural items
  - Usually reports
  - May not need to be discussed
  - Can just be approved

Formal Meetings

• Hot topics
  - Clearly state how the discussion will be handled
  - How long each speaker has
  - Be well prepared for this one!

Informal Meetings

• Still have an agenda
• No surprises
• Have someone take minutes
• Action items: who will do what and when

Informal Meetings

• Worst thing: nothing gets done
• Look out for the person who brings up a complex topic at the very end!
Disruptive Behavior

- Hot topic brought up not on the agenda
- Arguments (name-calling; shouting)
- Threats
- Intimidation, etc., etc.

None of this happens in academic settings, so don’t worry about it!

Disruptive Behavior

- Parking lot issues: save for another time
- This is not the place for this kind of behavior.
- Bring others into the discussion.
- Get a neutral opinion
- Who is in charge here??!
- Adjourn the meeting.

Workshops

- Plan interactive activities!
- Tell them what the activity is and why they are doing it.
- Allow enough time for interaction
- Don’t be a “talking head”

Scientific Sessions

- Have cards with 3- and 1-minute alert notice
- Get someone to be the timer
- Have a question if no one else asks one
- Repeat questions from the audience

Ten Commandments

1. No meeting unless absolutely necessary
2. Begin on time
3. Have a clear agenda
4. Stick to the agenda
5. Keep it moving and focused

Ten Commandments

6. Encourage participation
7. Lead, but not dominate the discussions
8. Remain impartial, but in charge
9. Have clear action items
10. End on time
Meeting Minutes
(All meetings should have 'em)

• Minutes should include
  - Time and date and place
  - Chair
  - Names of all present and apologies from absent

Meeting Minutes

- All agenda items discussed
- Decisions reached
- If action agreed on, record person responsible for the assignment
- Time the meeting ended (shows length of discussion)
- Date, time, and place of next meeting

Meeting Minutes

• Do not put anything into the minutes that you would not want on the front page of the Omaha World Herald or the Chronicle of Higher Education!
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New Business
Reports
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