



## **Meeting Management**

*Tips from the Trenches, or, suggestions  
for running successful meetings  
of boards & committees  
(by someone who has made all the mistakes)*

**The following is a list of pointers for all attendees of a meeting to be cognizant of. This information was presented at the 2006 annual meeting and discussion point from that meeting and subsequent insights have been used to inform the content of this document. As with all resources presented to aid committee and board work, this should be considered a living document and changes are welcomed to improve this for all people who may use it.**

**1. Invite the right people** - if possible call and invite people, don't rely on **email!**

Send out an agenda in advance if possible.

Put a notice in the Cream Sheet on the Sunday prior to the meeting.

Distribute last meeting minutes or other material in advance (but not too long before).

**2. Develop the agenda in advance** (see item 1 above and 'How to Prepare an Agenda')

Consult key individuals for items.

Organize agenda so that the most important items are dealt with first.

Clarify on agenda what's to be done - action, decision needed, discussion time estimates.

**3. Opening meetings**

Always start on time. Reward timeliness, not tardiness.

Welcome attendees and thank them for giving their time.

Review agenda briefly at the start of the meeting.

Ask for any urgent or additional items and add to agenda if appropriate/.

**4. Time management**

Try to keep the meeting going and on schedule – decide what to accomplish outside meeting.

Periodically check in with attendees that meeting is on track.

If you begin to see that you are running late, get approval for adding time.

If you need more time than that, schedule another meeting.

**5. Invite diverse opinions**

Be sure that the most vocal people don't dominate the meeting.

Ask directly for input from people who tend to be quiet.

**6. Evaluate meeting**

Save 5 to 10 minutes at the end for a meeting check in (don't skip, even if it seems superfluous).

Use a Round Robin approach and be sure to include everyone.

**7. Closing the meeting**

Always end meetings on time and try to end on a positive note.

**8. Meeting follow-up**

Clarify when minutes will be distributed, and what actions will be done by whom, when.

Be sure assignments are written down.

Then, check in as the month progresses.

## Meeting Management (cont.)

### **A few helpful suggestions to ease the load!**

- 1. Only schedule meetings that are important, and do your very best** not to cancel or postpone meetings. Canceling and postponing suggest that meetings are not really important, and that people can skip out on them on a whim.
- 2. Just as in real estate the most important thing is location, location, location**, in leadership, an important leadership skill is to delegate, delegate, delegate! As chair or member, you are not required to get everything done yourself, but to ensure that goals are accomplished. People love to be needed. Ask!
- 3. Keep track of what you are doing and what needs to be done.** Year to year, activities tend to be repeated at regular intervals. You don't need to reinvent the wheel! A simple way to establish a routine is to create a tickler file - using an index card box, with monthly dividers and cards; you can easily record tasks and note important information (dates, vendors, activities, leaders, etc.). The box can be handed off to the next board chair for updating and annual information.
- 4. Follow through!!** If your Board agrees on a task or activity, be sure to get it in writing, including the 3 Ws - who, when, where. And make sure that you keep in mind the 3 Cs - communicate, communicate, communicate! (voice, paper, either).
- 5. Remain focused.** There may be distractions from the work at hand. These can include tangents, asides, veering off course, private conversations, joking, too low attendance (no quorum – hard to make progress without entire service group's input).
- 6. Remain focused on the future.** Learn from the past, don't dwell on past hurts/errors.
- 7. Who's Got the Monkey?** Failure to delegate a task effectively can encourage reverse delegating. This can result in the delegator becoming delegated by the delegate(s) to see if the reverse-delegated task is completed. The task is the monkey, and the goal is to feed it or put it to rest so it doesn't just lie there.

The root of this seems to lie in time management. Some symptoms can include: letting papers and e-mails pile up; delaying decisions - thus frustrating both you all involved; getting farther behind; working late or up to (and past) deadlines. In many cases, when this is recognized, addressing it collectively as a board or committee and then deciding collectively how to move beyond this behavior will be successful in progressing beyond it.
- 8. Say "Thank you" often.** In person, on the phone, in writing. Everyone needs to know that they are valued and appreciated.
- 9. Finally, keep in mind that you are serving God and our congregation.** Each of us has talents and gifts for service. Each of us has different talents and gifts. Assume good will. Work together with love, listen with care, be supportive of others. Serve God, respect each other, go about the tasks with which you have been entrusted in faith, hope, and love.
- 10. Pray, celebrate and worship God.** Remember, you are not alone.

**Thank you for your service, and blessings on each and every one.**