

Tips for running an effective Group Committee meeting

Attending meetings can either a painful experience or a productive investment in time. Come learn how to lessen the pain!



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Why do Scout Groups need to hold meetings?

- Administer the business of the group (Finances and fundraising)
- Share information
- Mentor new leaders
- Ensure activities are coordinated where possible
- Group Planning



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Key Components of an Effective Meeting

1. Develop an agenda
2. Distribute the agenda and circulate background material prior to the meeting
3. Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it
4. Choose a location suitable to your group's size.
5. Start on time. End on time.
6. Stick to the agenda.
7. Encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas.
8. Encourage feedback.
9. Keep conversation focussed on the topic.
10. Tactfully end discussions when they are getting nowhere
11. Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference
12. Summarize agreements reached
13. Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Finishing on time
- Can't make decisions
- Dominant participants
- Silent participants
- Rehashing decisions
- Deal with small fires but not larger issues
- Key persons don't attend
- Lack of follow-through on tasks



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Common Meeting Problems

- Finishing on time
 - Designate a timekeeper to watch the clock and let participants know when time for an item is almost up, and then when it is *really* up.
 - Place topics that require more discussion at the very beginning of the agenda.
 - Start your meeting promptly on time



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Common Meeting Problems

- Can't make decisions
 - Create expectations with actionable agenda items that clearly convey what is expected.
 - Use prioritizing tools.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Dominant participants
 - One of the best ways to prevent domination is to structure the meeting discussions
 - If you have free-for-all open discussions that are wide-ranging and rambling, you are inviting domination by highly verbal individuals.
 - Well, what do you think?" invites the highly verbal people to fire up to talk. A better alternative is to say, "Here is the plan we've come up with, what do you think are the strengths of it that you would not want to lose, what causes you concern, and finally, did we miss anything"



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Common Meeting Problems

- Dominant participants
 - Even your best attempts to provide a good structure for discussion might not discourage a meeting dominator.
 - Suggest that many people who dominate really need a certain amount of attention.
 - Try to recap in a few words what the dominating person has said and then very consciously and obviously invite alternative views.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Silent participants
 - People are quiet in meetings for different reasons.
 - Some people are reticent by nature. Others are fearful that their opinions will be ridiculed and dismissed. Some are not comfortable speaking if they don't know for sure who everyone is. Some don't care.
 - It's your role as a group leader to try to engage everyone.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Rehashing decisions
 - Issues that were discussed and decided on in previous meetings sometimes re-emerge to be rehashed.
 - This can be very discouraging to the group or committee. Some reasons for this include:
 - People were not aware that a conclusive decision was actually made regarding a specific issue.
 - People recall that a decision was made, but the record of it is not available.
 - Dominant participants pushed through a decision in a previous meeting and silent participants begin to speak up afterwards.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Deal with small fires but not larger issues
 - Meetings are often used to deal with immediate problems.
 - When meetings focus only on immediate, urgent issues, larger and more global issues may be ignored.
 - As leader you can ensure that you discuss something that is important, but not necessarily urgent, at every meeting.
 - Consider asking a neutral facilitator to help plan how best to introduce, segment into manageable parts, and discuss a large or difficult issue



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Common Meeting Problems

- Key persons don't attend
 - When key persons don't attend meetings, decisions may be made that are later questioned and not implemented as hoped.
 - Diagnose the problem by understanding why people aren't attending.
 - Ask a few of the non-attenders in an exploratory way, rather than threatening way, why they don't come. You might say, "We've been missing your ideas at the meeting. Is it a bad time for you or are the meetings themselves the problem?"



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Common Meeting Problems

- Key persons don't attend
 - Make your meetings worth attending so that real work gets done.
 - If meetings are used primarily for announcements and information sharing, there may be better ways to share the information (e.g. E-mail)



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Common Meeting Problems

- Lack of follow-through on tasks
 - The effectiveness of a meeting can be measured in terms of its outcomes.
 - If people don't follow-through on action plans, tasks and decisions after the meeting ends, then one needs to question the value of having a meeting in the first place.
 - The leader is the single most important factor in follow-through. It's your job to be clear at the end of every meeting who is responsible for what and by when.



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Common Meeting Problems

- Lack of follow-through on tasks
 - How to achieve follow-through:
 - Written action plans. People usually need to be able to see in writing what action is required of them and by when.
 - Point persons ensure that a goal is moving forward.
 - Check meetings or phone status-check meetings should be set up when the action is first being planned. There is nothing like a deadline to stimulate action.



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Agendas

- Creating an effective agenda is one of the most important elements for a productive meeting.
- The Agenda communicates important information such as:
 - topics for discussion
 - presenter or discussion leader for each topic
 - time allotment for each topic
 - provides an outline for the meeting (how long to spend on which topics)
 - what is the intended outcome of the topic



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Taking Minutes

- Keep it simple
- Don't need to record what everyone said
- Recommend recording the following:
 - Date of meeting
 - Who attended
 - Topic of discussion
 - Action to be taken or decision made
 - Person responsible
 - Date of next meeting



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Conduct of meetings

- Although Robert's Rules of Order are the official "ground rules" for meetings, many meetings are far less formal and have a faster flow with more interaction among attendees.
- A set of ground rules is still necessary, ones that facilitate discussion and not inhibit it.
- If meetings get "out of hand", then Robert's Rules would be the set of rules to revert to avoid or manage conflict.



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Conduct of meetings

- Suggested Ground Rules you can adopt:
 - Meetings will start and end on time.
 - Everyone will participate.
 - Comments will be non-judgmental.
 - No one will interrupt anyone else.
 - Assigned tasks will be done on time.
 - Questions will be asked to clarify.
 - Turn off cell phones
 - Treat other members with respect, even in the face of disagreement
 - Send a substitute if you cannot attend
 - Arrive on time



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Making meetings fun

- If your meetings tend to be dominated by a few people, try passing out five pennies to each meeting attendee. Attendees must spend" a penny each time they talk. And no borrowing allowed!
- Use a talking stick
- Use of ice breakers at the beginning of the year e.g. have participants say 3 things about themselves (2 are the truth)



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Typical agenda

- Here is a typical agenda for a Group Committee meeting:
 - Opening Prayer
 - Minutes of the previous meeting
 - Unfinished business
 - Correspondence
 - Group Chair report
 - Group Commissioner report
 - Treasurers report
 - Reports from leaders
 - New business
 - Adjournment.



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What to do before a meeting

1. Clarify purpose and aims
2. Create an agenda
3. Schedule the meeting
4. Post and send out agenda
5. Circulate supporting information
6. Make room arrangements
7. Arrange for recorder



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What to do during a meeting

1. Start meeting on time
2. Ensure quorum
3. Review agenda - (aims and purposes of the meeting, what decisions must be made or actions must be taken.)
4. Keep discussion focused
5. Encourage participation
6. Help group come to decisions
7. Summarize decisions
8. Agree on action plan
9. Draft agenda for next meeting
10. Evaluate meeting



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What to do after the meeting

- Distribute minutes
- Archive meeting documents -all meeting documents including the agenda, minutes and supporting documents should be kept together and archived.
- Check on action



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For Discussion

- How effective have your your Groups meetings been?
- Have you come across your own meeting problems?
- Do you see any barriers to implementing some of the suggestions in this workshop?
- What do you think you will change for your next meeting?



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