

# Less Time, More Impact

## Suggestions for Surviving in Organizations

### Agendas...Yours, Mine, Ours?

Mariann has a problem. Tomorrow she has a loan committee meeting at the bank. She needs to spend some time tonight going over a loan application. An organization she really cares about is having its regular meeting. Should she go?

The circumstances may be different, but your organization's members face this same question every meeting day. If they come to the meeting and their time is not spent the way they expect, they may not come the next time.

An effective agenda, provided well in advance of the meeting, tells the members more than when and where the meeting will take place, it tells them what will be decided, and when they can leave. Remember: Start on time and end on time.

The person in charge of the meeting needs an agenda. An agenda is a plan for the meeting. It informs the organization's members what the organization is up to, problems that need attention, and decisions that must be made.

Once the agenda is set, everyone who attends the meeting should know what is to be discussed and acted upon and what is an unnecessary distraction to getting down to business.

The meeting stands a much better chance of being a success because no necessary decisions are forgotten, everyone knows what to expect, and everyone has been informed of the "who, what, when, where, and why" of the meeting.

In developing the agenda consider the needs of group members, tasks to accomplish, and the next stage to build on past group work.

Methods for developing the agenda include:

- Group identifies items for future meeting(s) at current meeting,
- Leader(s) polls group members for ideas between meetings,
- Leader(s) decides agenda items.



If you are expected to conduct or attend a meeting, here are some tips:

- 1) **Get the agenda out well in advance of the meeting.** That assures better attendance and gives members a chance to prepare for the meeting.
- 2) **Agendas...Don't leave home without them.** When you get to the meeting, you need to know what is to be done and in what order. Your organization or committee members need to know that too. If there is no advance agenda telling them what the group needs to do, you don't have a good reason to attend...so you don't go!
- 3) **Review the Agenda** at the meeting with other organization members to be sure that everything is included. Look at last year's agenda for the same meeting to see if any annual items need to be considered.
- 4) **Include in the Agenda:**
  - The NAME of the group that is meeting,
  - The DATE, TIME, and PLACE of the meeting,

- INTRODUCTIONS or CHECK IN, if appropriate (introductions are useful for new members, check ins are useful for building group relationships),
  - The MINUTES, REPORTS, AND COMMUNICATIONS that will be presented,
  - The BUSINESS that will be discussed and acted upon,
  - The TIME that the business part of the meeting will conclude.
  - Setting the NEXT MEETING time and location.
- 5) **If socializing is important** to your group, include that as optional time after the business meeting. That way, people who have other responsibilities after the meetings know they can attend, and leave at the end of business, and still get other things done.
- 6) **Once the agenda is set, follow it!** If the meeting follows the agenda, people will leave with a sense of accomplishment and confidence in the organization's leadership.

If important items arise that are not on the agenda, plan to deal with them at a future meeting. If urgent, arrange an ad hoc group to address it soon.

Adherence to the agenda is especially important in general sessions of the organization. Committees can be a little more flexible in adjusting time for issues that emerge during the meeting.

A good agenda, strictly followed by the person in charge of the meeting, makes for a productive meeting. It's productive meetings that help organizations make a difference.

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*An Oconto County University  
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