

3. Lack of commitment
4. Avoidance of accountability
5. Inattention to results

Facilitator Duties

Meetings can make or break an organization. If meetings are well prepared, focused on planning for action, and facilitated in an efficient, yet involving and upbeat manner, they help build a strong and productive organization. On the other hand, if meetings are poorly planned, poorly run, and don't focus on planning for action, it is difficult, if not impossible to make progress and accomplish desired change.

Preparing for a meeting

- **Understand the charge of the organization or group**
 - Why does this group exist?
 - What is the work of the group?
 - What history, if any, exists for this group?
 - Who is the group accountable to?
 - What will the expected results/outcomes be?
- **Prepare an agenda**
 - Develop the agenda based on:
 - priorities that have been set
 - issues that arose at the previous meeting
 - items to be carried over from the previous meeting
 - Consider arranging the agenda in the following order:
 1. **Easy decisions**—Ask the group to make a few easy decisions; it gets people off to the right start.
 2. **Hard, controversial decisions**—Next put the hard decisions that require lots of discussion.
 3. **Moderate, non controversial decisions**—At the end, put decisions that are of moderate importance, but upon which most people will probably agree. People are tired, so they don't want to debate things, and you want to end the meeting on a harmonious note.



- Note the times the meeting will begin and end.
- Provide some background on each item.
- List the objective of the discussion for each agenda item.
- Assign suggested time limits to each agenda item.
- Make a copy of the agenda for each member.
- Send the agenda out to members prior to the meeting.

Setting up the meeting

- **Arrange a mutually convenient time**
- **Pick a familiar location**
- **Make sure the site is accessible**
- **Check for adequate facilities— meeting space, restrooms, chairs, parking, place for snacks, etc. tables,**
- **Keep the space free from interruptions and intrusions such as phones ringing, people using a kitchen area or copy machine, etc.**

Improving turnout

- **Make plans to remind people.**
 - Do not rely on mailings.
 - Get volunteer help, if necessary, to call everyone a day or so ahead.
- **Childcare and transportation arrangements can increase participation.**
 - Mention these in the calls.

Preparing the site and logistics

- **Room arrangements/logistics**
 - Chair and table arrangements.
 - Chairs in circles or around tables encourage discussion and cohesiveness.
 - Podiums and theater arrangement encourage formality.
 - Set up fewer chairs than the number expected. It's better to add chairs than have chairs sitting empty.



- Newsprint pads—Will tape damage the walls? Is an easel available?
- Sign in—Where can the sign-in table be placed to assure getting names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for follow-up?
- Refreshments—Will there be refreshments? Who will bring them? Is there a need for outlets for coffee pots? How can refreshments be set up so people can access them without disrupting the meeting? Who will handle cleanup?
- AV equipment—Are microphones, overhead projector, VCR, needed? Is technical help available for the equipment?
- Name tags—Are name tags and wide markers available? Use first names.
- Have pens and paper available

Once you have prepared for the meeting, most of the work is over. It's like producing a play. The time-consuming part is the rehearsing, not the actual performance.

Facilitating a meeting

1. Welcome people to the meeting

- Physically go to them and shake their hand if appropriate.
- Express appreciation for their attendance.
- Help them find a place to sit.

2. Begin the meeting on time even if all are not present

- Beginning meetings late allows people to get in the habit of coming late.
- Shows respect for those who arrive on time.

3. Make an opening/welcoming statement to the entire membership

- Restate the timeframe for the beginning and ending times
- Minimize interruptions
 - Ask for cell phones and pagers to be turned off.

4. Do introductions

- Introducing members plays an important role in building cohesiveness and group identity.
- Make a personal introduction and model what want the members should share.



- Incorporate ‘Ice Breakers’ or questions that provide useful information to help people to get to know each other. Some possible questions are:
 - Is there something you want to know about the organization?
 - How did you first get involved with the organization?
 - What issue is a priority?
 (See Appendix A for Sample Ice Breakers)

5. Determine or clarify the charge of the group

- Gives everyone the same understanding
- Helps keep the meeting on track

6. Determine roles for group members

- Recorder/secretary
- Time keeper
- Treasurer

7. Encourage the development of ground rules or review if they are already set

- Post them on the wall during meetings
(See appendix B for sample ground rules)

8. Review the agenda

- Ask for any additions or changes from the group

9. Explain the meeting rules and how decisions are made – by consensus or voting

10. Encourage participation

- Invite and give everyone a chance to speak
- Seek input specifically from new or quiet members by asking questions such as, ‘have you had a similar experience?’, ‘what is your reaction or how do you feel about this?’

11. Stick to the agenda

- Remind people or highlight the agenda item being discussed.
- Follow the allotted time laid out for each agenda item.

12. Avoid detailed decision-making

- Details are typically best done by a smaller subgroup or a couple of people who bring ideas back to the large group.



13. Move to action

- Next steps to reach the desired outcomes.
- Set up timelines for activities to be accomplished.
(See Appendix C for Setting Goals)

14. Seek commitments

- Find individuals or groups to accomplish activities.

15. Bring closure to discussions

- Ask people to wrap up their discussions.
- Ask people if there are items that need further discussion and should go on the agenda for the next meeting.

16. Summarize the meeting results

- Conclusions from the discussions.
- Activities decided upon.
- Individual(s) responsible for accomplishing the activities.
- Timelines.
- Next meeting date and time.

17. Thank people—for their time, expertise and commitment

18. Close the meeting on or before the ending time

- People are more likely to keep coming if their time is respected.

Follow up to the meeting

- **Do it and do it promptly**
- **Make sure the meeting notes/minutes are prepared soon after the meeting**
- **Thank people who helped make the meeting successful**
- **Disseminate the minutes to members and other appropriate places**
- **Place a copy of the meeting notes in an organizational notebook or file so that everyone knows where the “institutional memory” is kept**

