



Running Great Meetings!

Feb 2, 2016

There's nothing worse than sitting through a poorly-run meeting – it's a sure fire way to put people off joining your committee. But a well-run, energetic meeting can be inspiring and be motivating to those attending.

Firstly, make sure you have a written agenda, so people know what's going to be discussed, and you stick to the topics you need to cover.

Put timeframes against your agenda items – it helps keep the meeting on schedule if discussions are becoming lengthy.

Stick to the agenda – there's nothing worse than expecting to be at a meeting for an hour and still being there two hours later. If important discussions develop and you need to spend more time than allocated, get the group's agreement to either postpone other less important matters to the next meeting or to extend the finish time of the current meeting.

Circulate the agenda at least a week before the meeting to give people a chance to add any items, as well as time to think ahead about the issues to be discussed.

Circulate any other meeting papers with the agenda too, to give time to read them before the meeting, so your valuable meeting time is not wasted on reading.

During the meeting, it's the chair's job to keep the meeting orderly and on schedule. This can involve managing participants (respectfully!) who might dominate the discussion and encouraging others to have their say. If your meetings tend to be overrun by the excessive discussion it might be necessary to formalise your procedures – look up 'Robert's Rules of Order' for a comprehensive guide to meeting procedures.

Good minutes are essential – they don't need to be a word-for-word transcript of what was said but they do need to capture the main points, any decisions made, any actions to be taken, and associated timeframes and people responsible. Record any motions tabled, who moved and seconded them, and whether they were carried by the meeting (thus becoming a resolution).

And finally get the minutes out ASAP while the discussions are still fresh in your mind. Plus people need plenty of time to attend to their actions before the next meeting (and they may not have taken their own notes), so don't leave it until the last minute.