

EFFECTIVE MEETING STRATEGIES

Do you dread attending meetings because they have a tendency to be dull, unproductive, disorganized and too long? With proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and enjoyable. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will run smoothly. The following are some tips to help you make your next meeting successful, productive and fun.

Functions of Meetings:

- Give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives.
- Keep members updated on current events.
- Provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive.
- Allow the group to pull resources together for decision making.
- Make sure members are aware of their importance in the group. Ask for opinions and ideas.

Before the Meeting:

- Define the purpose(s) of the meeting with an agenda.
 - Sample Agenda
 - ❑ Approval of Agenda, any additions or retractions
 - ❑ Correction and Approval of Minutes (if taken and distributed)
 - ❑ Announcements
 - ❑ Treasurer's Report
 - ❑ Committee Reports
 - ❑ Unfinished Business
 - ❑ New Business
 - ❑ Special Issues/Concerns
 - ❑ Adjournment
- Distribute the agenda (e-mail works well) and background material (articles, reviews) that must be read before the meeting.
- Set a reasonable meeting time limit, given the amount of material on the agenda
- Reserve a room through the Scheduling Office (www.willamette.edu/dept/schedule/). A separate handout is available for more specific information on reserving a room. When reserving the room, it is important to think about:
 1. **Size:** Not too small to recognize each member's personal space.
 2. **Arrangement:** Chairs in a circle, semi-circle or U-shape allows for easy sight of all members and help member to feel included.
 3. **Variety:** Meet in different places (not every week though) to keep their attention and accommodate different members.
- Posters, diagrams, or even a dry erase board/chalk board to display important points or decisions are all examples of easy and productive visual aids.

(Over)

During the Meeting:

Attitude

- Greet members and make them feel welcome, even late members when appropriate.
- As a leader, be a role model. During meetings, listen, appreciate and encourage members, show interest and confidence in members. Do not hold a side conversation, pass notes, check email, Facebook or text.
- Be professional and courteous. Allow everyone the chance to talk.

Atmosphere

- Serve light refreshments – or even candy – when possible, they are good icebreakers and make people relax.
- Encourage group discussion and feedback on all discussion topics. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members that help shape the activities and the committee.
- Keep conversation focused. Tactfully end discussions when they are unproductive or becoming destructive.

Agenda

- Start on time and end on time. Be respectful of other peoples schedules.
- Review the agenda and then stick to it.
- Appoint someone to keep minutes of the meeting to send out after every meeting and for future reference.

Accomplishments

- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things that they thought were good or successful.

Adjournment

- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.
- Only set a meeting if it is really necessary. Do not set a meeting just for the sake of having one.

After the Meeting:

Assessment

- Write up and distribute minutes by the next day. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting and reduces the chance of errors.
- Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers, come up with solutions and implement them at the next meeting.
- Follow-up on delegated tasks. See that all members understand and fulfill his/her responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct periodic evaluations of the meetings, either privately or publicly. See the *Meeting Assessment Checklist* for more information on how to do this.

This is one of many handouts available to you. Feel free to meet with any Student Activities staff member for more details about this topic or any others related to leadership or your student organization. We also have open advising hours every Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Office of Student Activities is located in the University Center, on the 2nd floor, or by telephone at (503) 370-6463. Visit our website at www.willamette.edu/dept/osa. Adapted from the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, University of Michigan.