



UUA How to Run a Successful Meeting

State The Purpose

Most important is to clearly state the purpose of the meeting. Many meetings are doomed before they start by improperly set expectations.

Greetings And Introductions

Meetings happen through speaking and listening. Greet each person and provide the opportunity for each person to get to meet others.

Have An Agenda

This can be done before the meeting or during the meeting just after the greetings and introductions. One good way to start this process is by asking the question, "When this meeting is over and a roaring success, what happened?" Write down the answers and design the agenda to make it happen. If done before the meeting, review it and provide the opportunity for additions and corrections.

Be On-Time

Start on time and end on time. Set limits for each agenda item. Have a time-keeper. The more you take the meeting seriously the more the participants will. If you feel that you require more time, ask permission to go over, or you can arrange for another time.

Be Prepared

Often this means making phone calls before the meeting and gathering needed materials. Make arrangements for someone to capture the agenda, discussion points, and action items. Meeting time is precious. If you treat it that way, others will too. Be prepared!

Set Positions

Facilitator: Everything on this list is part of the work of the facilitator. But during the meeting you may find it useful to set up some other positions to assist you in running a smooth-running meeting. You can, of course, make sure that these things get done however you wish, but they are important to your meeting's effectiveness.

Scribe: This person will take whatever notes are necessary. It may just be to keep track of who has made what commitments so that there's a record, or there may be a need for more substantial notes if people are reporting back about things that they've already done. This is not the person who would, for example, write on newsprint for others to see. Let volunteers in the group do that.

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Energy Monitor: The energy monitor pays special attention to how the group is functioning on a personal level, as a group, and as individuals. They throw in spontaneous songs, stretches, or breaks, depending on the mood of the group. They watch for the loss of concentration among members, intense emotional discussions which need a break, and needed pauses after momentous decisions. The job of energy monitor is very important for good group process. It is essential that the person who is the Energy Monitor feels well rested and full of energy so that they can effectively monitor the group.

Maintain Focus

Give people something to look at as well as to listen to. Exploit opportunities for movement. Ask the participants to get more involved by recording brainstorming, handing out papers, etc. It may help to have a "topic watchers" -- one whose role is to call attention to the times when the discussion is off the topic. You can have a prop that can be picked up and waved by anyone. The main thing here is to have some process for handling getting off track.

Converting Words Into Action

Accomplishments happen when people take action. One way to move into action is with a request. You can ask, "Does someone want to do this?" Sometimes this works, but when it doesn't try asking, "Joe -- will you ask the minister if we can paint her cat blue at the next con and report back on what she said at the next Wednesday's meeting?" The structure of the request is simple; will who do what by when. A well formed request says what is to be done how we will know it was done. Also, a request without a due date seldom produces action. To be effective, requests are recorded, tracked, and reviewed at each meeting.

Review The Meeting

Successful meetings take effort and produce accomplishment. Schedule time near the end of the meeting to review what happened and acknowledge the effort. When people feel good about themselves and what's happening, they are more likely to make an extra effort to get things done.

Yield The Last Word

Allow each person the opportunity to say what-ever they wish as a last word for the meeting. Pay attention, this may be where the most valuable contribution is made.

From the Leadership Development Conference by the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.