

# HOW TO CONDUCT A BUSINESS MEETING

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The Chairman's Motto:

**Make the other members as fruitful as possible in the shortest time available.**

## I. FUTURE PREPARATION

### A. For yourself — make a list of all the things that will eventually need to be addressed

Categorize list in sections of priority and sequence. Then approximately divide items into "one evening's board work." Doing this gives you the long haul know how. It gives sequence. It avoids missing crucial items. It makes you the intelligent chairman who is one step ahead of things. This gives confidence to the other board members.

Delegate this task if desired.

### B. Business Meeting – Written Agendas

How much time is often lost because people at a meeting do not know what the agenda is? Because of the lack of direction countless meetings bog down into interminable discussions. Volunteer committees stagger home in the late hours of the morning, exhausted from lack of accomplishment rather than exhilarated from the joy of things well done.

If you're going to bring a group of people together, write down an agenda, even if it's for a meeting of ten or fifteen minutes. By announcing to everyone (including yourself) why you have come together, what you hope to accomplish, and how you intent to go about it, you will save a great deal of time and an equal amount of frustration.

Make a written outline of the meeting ahead of time. This makes the time so much more concrete and on target. If possible send a copy of the outline to meeting participants ahead of time; this really helps them to come prepared with one mind to discuss the priorities on hand.



## II. LEADING A TARGETED DISCUSSION

### A. The job of the chairman is to:

- a) bring up an issue, b) enlist participation, c) make a decision.

## B. A good format is:

The chairman states the issue in one sentence.

Wait a moment to let it sink in.

Then go around and make sure each member participates orally with at least one comment.

If the issue is clear the secretary should state the issue as it will appear in writing.

Then there should be a short discussion to improve the written version until the group is satisfied.

The chairman then asks for a consensus of each member.

Secretary writes down consensus — yes / no — unanimous — against, etc.

Item closed — new item can begin.

(If at any point an item is not clear to a member, ask another member to explain it. Only if that fails should the chairman himself explain the issue.)

## III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHAIRMAN TALKS

### A. A chairman should not talk!

His job is to lead the discussion of others and help them to come to good decisions.

### B. When a chairman talks:

- a) The meeting will drag out long with little accomplishment.
- b) It gives the feeling he feels important or wants to control the meeting.
- c) It makes others feel less important, it intimidates them with feelings of "he knows it all, what am I doing here?"
- d) It jeopardizes balance of input and decision making. "It tends to make others just agree with him."
- e) It brings "unwarranted" criticism like ramrodding one's way through, etc.



### C. A chairman should:

avoid two-way conversations between him and one other member.

### D. A chairman should:

avoid commenting on a comment by others.

If he disagrees he should let another member express their feeling or correct it at a later time.

### E. A chairman should:

talk only to issue a new item or when the discussion stops. In this case he should pause for a long time, then briefly say something to get the meeting going again.

### F. A chairman should:

gently correct, steer and avoid arguments among members.

### **G. A chairman should:**

keep all discussions to the point and brief so the meeting progresses and there is a feeling of accomplishment among the group.

## **IV. HOW A CHAIRMAN PROPERLY LEADS A DISCUSSION**

### **A. Follow the agenda stated**

### **B. Make sure all discussion stays on that one agenda point presently under discussion**

### **C Have a separate sheet of paper for each agenda item**

Have the item title written at the top and numbered in sequence.

### **D. Briefly jot down each valuable comment from every member that contributes**

This list will help the chairman to see what is said and how "hot" an item is.

This list will help the secretary to make a final written statement about that issue.

This list will be invaluable in formulating a correct final statement.

### **E. When discussion dies down**

have the secretary formulate some sort of a statement that will carry over the idea for the next meeting or for others to follow up on.

### **F. Have members improve the written version until all are satisfied.**

This can be a tedious job, but it avoids much future hassle.

### **G. Take a consensus of the members**

make a decision and have it properly recorded.

### **H. Have a break**

coffee, bathroom, or other. Make clear the item is finished before going on to another item.

### **I. Repeat the above for each item**



## V. THE CHAIRMAN'S JOB IS TO PRODUCE DECISIONS

### A. Produce Decisions

The chairman's job basically is to crank out decisions as fast as he can. The faster he can, the shorter the meetings

and the less meetings are needed. Things that assist:

1. Homework prior to the meeting is the whole key.
2. Have a clear agenda that all know and agree to.
3. Keep discussion as short and to the point as possible.

(The problem here is that too short of a discussion or not enough time to digest or ask questions can stifle the atmosphere.)

4. The chairman should enter discussions as little as possible.
5. The chairman should call for a decision about every 15 minutes and see if there is one. ( Usually members can make faster decisions than chairmen think).
6. Make sure decisions are properly recorded.
7. Recorded decisions are the purpose and fruit of board meetings.

Therefore each evening the going home question each member has is: "What did we actually produce. How much progress have we made."

*The chairman's job is to make the other members as fruitful as possible in the shortest time available.*

## VI. THE CHAIRMAN'S SECRET

The secret of a good chairman is: "*Think Decision*".

A 5 point synopsis:

- ask the question / state the topic;
- listen to others and make brief notes (2 or 3 words)
- think "decision" while listening.
- call the shot at the right time.
- write down conclusion.

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## VII. FINALIZING EACH MEETING

As leaders we are all (a) overly busy, and (b) more people oriented than paper oriented.

Therefore follow-up notes should be short and about one topic only.

Notes like that can be quickly read and easily digested; they can also be filed by topic.

### A. Bringing closure to each meeting:

1. At the end of a meeting make up an agenda for the following meeting.

This helps members to be focused for next time.

2. Insist that each member writes down the agenda for themselves to take home.  
This gets them involved and geared up for participation.  
People are too busy with their own lives to remember unwritten agendas.
3. Pass out materials or whatever for background information to be studied by each at home.
4. If certain members have assignments be sure they are clear what to do, when to do it and how to report.  
This should give you an active in tune team to work with next time.

## **B. As Soon As Possible**

How many times when you have asked people when a job would be completed, have they replied “as soon as possible”? (How many times have you done the same thing?)

Avoid using the phrase “as soon as possible” like the plague. It is absolutely meaningless. Nothing is gained by it. Nothing is learned by it.

## **C. Record the Results**

Write an ‘After Action Report’ following a meeting. An After Action Report is simply a short analysis while things are still fresh in the leader’s mind. Such a short analysis really helps to follow up with things and be prepared for future discussions. I have found that the exercise of putting these thoughts in writing greatly enhances clarity of what expired and what lies on the table to be enacted upon. Most leaders that I work with do not do so and considerable confusion results; this is particularly true in Ukraine. If you are interested I would really suggest you try it. After a few attempts I think you’ll find it a helpful style in your leadership position.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by New Life for Churches. You have the privilege to use this lecture with others.