

TIPS FOR CREATING EFFECTIVE AGENDAS

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1. At least a week before the meeting, list the topics which must to be on the agenda. Those items may include old and new business, recommendations for action, adoption of new policies. Staff and the President should set the agenda, making sure that all items are appropriate Board of Directors concerns.
 - a. Refer items appropriate to a committee before it comes to the Directors
 - b. Avoid placing administrative and management items on the agenda as business. The Directors should act on policy matters and matters of strategy. (Staff should be empowered to make operational decisions guided by the budget, business plans, and adopted policies.)
 - c. Let board members know how and when they can add items to the agenda.
 - d. Add "Acceptance of the Agenda" as the first motion of a Board meeting. This will be the last call for new items.
 - e. Adopt a polity that in most cases, newly added topics may be discussed but not acted on without further study.
2. Together with the staff, assemble the agenda.
 - a. Research items and include supporting data, committee findings, options and recommendations for actions.
 - b. When appropriate, include wording for a proposed motion or resolution.
3. Don't include agenda items which are not ready to be acted on. If a committee has not completed it's recommendation on an item, don't include it as business. A staff person may want to update the Board on progress, but to discuss it would be counter-productive. .
4. Consider using a consent agenda and vote on routine matters and committee reports without explanation or discussion. Group these items together at the beginning of the meeting. Any director may request removal an item from the consent calendar for separate discussion later in the agenda. There will then be one motion to approve all items on the consent agenda.
 - a. Note: If the Board is empowered by its bylaws to take votes when not in meetings, those votes should be included in the consent calendar for ratification and inclusion in the written minutes of the Board.
5. In dealing with agenda items requiring action, allow sufficient time for discussion to encourage opposing points of view, clarification of ideas and expression of personal viewpoints. It is good practice to have a specific motion in front of everyone before discussion begins.
6. If an item needs energy and creativity, put it near the beginning of the agenda.
7. Use a timed agenda. The chairman will then have a pattern for controlling debate. A timed agenda gives participants in the meeting a concept of the relative weight of various items of business, and helps avoid prolonged discussion on trivial matters.

8. Minimize oral reports. Require written reports from committees and staff. These reports are informational and do not require discussion or action. They should be included in the meeting packet.
9. If you avoid the micromanagement issues by careful agenda construction, you will have time to do the work of a Board, which is to be strategic. A part of each agenda might be a few minutes of guided discussion on, say, the association's community image.
10. Place 'hot' issues on the agenda carefully, following them with less controversial issues so that the group ends a meeting on a note of teamwork. Also, consider establishing a directors' list serve to hold prolonged examination of issues prior to the meeting itself. And if an issue is really controversial and needs prolonged examination, schedule a study session either in person or by teleconference. Do not vote on the issue during the study session, but let the intended action 'season' before a final vote in accordance with the bylaws.
11. Urgent items precede more trivial ones. The agenda should reflect this value..
12. On the agenda, list the name of the person responsible for presenting each item, and indicate the action required.
13. Present the agenda to the Directors in a packet, complete with supporting items, several days before the meeting...Five days is a good number. Organize the packet so that it is easy to follow, perhaps with tabs or numbered appendices
14. It's a good idea to place your organizational mission statement at the top of each agenda.
15. Avoid anti-trust issues. It is up to the Chairman to immediately stop such discussions and, if necessary, adjourn the meeting if they continue. It may be wise to keep an antitrust avoidance statement easily visible to the participants.
16. It is the Chairman's job to enforce the meeting plan as set by the motion at the beginning of the meeting to accept the agenda, and to adjourn the meeting in a timely manner.

Agenda Template

Header including time, place Organization Mission Statement

9: 00 AM	Call to Order (President Stone) Roll Call	
9:05 AM	Motion to Approve the Agenda	Approve
9:06 AM	Motion to Approve Consent Calendar Minutes of the Last Meeting* Social Committee Minutes* Approval of Travel Expense Reports*	Approve
9:07 AM	Report of the Treasurer* (John Smith)	Accept
9:10 AM	Report of the President (Pres. Stone)	Review
9:15 AM	Management and Staff Reports* (CEO) Building Repairs Current Membership Trends	Review
9:25 AM	Pending Business Affiliate Membership Drive (Mary Orb) (Business plan attached)*	Approve
9:35 AM	New Business Brainstorming Question: "How Can We Better Serve Members who are 50 Miles Away? (Background Reading Attached)*	Discussion
9:50 AM	Approval of New Members*	
9:55 AM	Adjourn (President Stone)	
