

Meeting Facilitation

The key to meeting facilitation is keeping people on time, on task and onboard as a group. Meeting facilitation takes time and practice in order to find your best leadership style. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback and suggestions from fellow board members on ways to improve your meetings.

8 Tips to Make Facilitating a Meeting Easier:

1. Be Prepared

Plan the agenda and make sure notice has gone out at least one week prior to the meeting. Contact presenters to make sure they will be in attendance. Touch base with fellow board members to make sure all tasks are covered and that everyone understands their specific role/responsibility.

2. Review the Agenda and Ground Rules

Always state ground rules at the beginning of your meeting as a friendly reminder to your board and general membership. Your meeting has a better chance of running smoothly if everyone understands the way the meeting will be run; what will be tolerated and what won't.

3. Facilitate Voting and Decision-Making

Never assume an agreement has been reached without a vote. The Chair should take 2 minutes to remind everyone how voting works. Make 'membership' clear at the beginning of the meeting as well as prior to a vote. Always distinguish between what board members vote on and what general membership votes on.

4. Stay on Time

It is often helpful to assign the role of timekeeper to another board member so that time will be better monitored and conversation can be ended more easily. If time limits are set at the beginning of the meeting everyone will know what to expect when they ask for a turn to speak. Remember, your agenda can help you out here too; let it be the "bad guy" if a time-keeper is unavailable (Ex. "According to the agenda we need to move on to our next topic...").

5. Direct the Discussion and Keep People on Topic

If people are being repetitive, recap information for the group (you can address this in your ground rules!). If a decision needs to be made, call for a motion from the group.

6. Always Maintain your Role as Chair

Facilitate group discussions, making sure all are being heard. Do not abuse your position and monopolize the floor. Limit your own opinions and stay neutral.

7. Mediate Arguments

Give each side the chance to state their point of view. Remain impartial and fair. State the amount of time allotted for each topic beforehand and give each party equal time on the floor.

8. Wrap-Up at the End of the Meeting

Briefly review all discussions, decisions to be made action items. Make sure there is clarity by the end of the meeting. Don't forget to acknowledge any new faces in the room and encourage/remind them to sign in.

Ways to make sure everyone feels heard and participates

- *Minimize cross talk and consider the needs of different personalities and cultures in your meetings.
- *Have discussions that mix large and small groups when appropriate.
- *Be flexible and allow time for questions to ensure understanding.
- *Control the flow of discussion and guide your group to making decisions and reaching consensus.
- *Summarize discussions so that others have a sense of conclusion, i.e. "So far, what I've heard you say is...? Is that accurate?"
- *Address disruptive influences and make meetings more accessible, welcoming and productive for all in attendance.
- *Don't allow others to take over the meeting through intimidation, anger or outrageous behavior.
- *Set boundaries, but validate participants' contributions. "I see that you are frustrated that this issue is not on the agenda and that it is important to you. Perhaps a few of us would be willing to stay after the meeting and set a good time for having this discussion."