

Running a Meeting

Meetings are the places where issues get discussed and decisions get made together with a team. Meetings become necessary when people work on goals together. There is little chance of a good team effectiveness if productive meetings don't occur. Here are some basic guidelines about running a meeting.

1. Decide whether the meeting will be formal or informal. Formal meetings follow a strict set of rules and procedures that are policed by a chairperson. Motions will be presented correctly, discussion will be limited by rules, and decisions will be made by vote. Informal meetings don't have set procedures for decision-making, but will have a chair, operate according to an agenda, informally make decisions and record these decisions. I prefer a more informal approach to most meetings because it engenders an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. However, if trust is not present, formal structures may be more effective.

2. Decide who will set the agenda and who will chair the meeting. While in theory the chair is impartial, in fact the chair has great influence in a meeting. For example, the chair can set the agenda, set the tone of the meeting, introduce the issues, direct the discussion, and decide how a discussion will conclude and how the issue will be resolved. As meetings become less formal, the influence of the chair grows because there are no rules governing the meeting; nothing external for the participants to appeal to. The choice of an effective chair is crucial.

3. Decide who will record the decisions. No matter how informal the meeting, some method of recording decisions is vital. If decisions are not recorded, some issues will be discussed again, participants will arrive at different conclusions, and some decisions will not be implemented. The decisions can be recorded by a minute secretary who is not a participant in the discussion, by a designated member of the meeting, or by the chairperson.

4. Keep the meeting moving. Meetings can easily become bogged down with dogmatic members, unfocused discussions, unimportant issues, and unnecessary banter. Don't let anyone dominate and try to stick to time. There is a place for fun, but make sure you get the job done. Meetings involve a huge amount of resources if you count the time of everyone present. Be a good steward of those resources.

5. Cover the basics. Basic aspects of most meetings include prayer, checking the decisions of the last meeting, giving reports on what has happened since the last meeting, continuing discussion of unfinished issues, discussion of new issues, and deciding when the next meeting will be.

Not everyone enjoys meetings, but productive meetings will greatly help in the development of strong team effectiveness. It's worthwhile doing meetings well.