
FACILITATING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Workshop Handout

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SECTION 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MEETING

An effective meeting is a critical tool for collaboration, decision-making, and progress within an organization. Here are the key elements that make a meeting successful:

- ✓ **Clear Objective:** Define the purpose of the meeting. This helps to focus discussions and ensures everyone understands the desired outcome.
- ✓ **Relevant Attendees:** Invite only necessary participants to keep the meeting productive. Each attendee should contribute or benefit from the discussion.
- ✓ **Agenda:** Create and distribute an agenda in advance. It should outline topics, time allocations, and who is responsible for each discussion point.
- ✓ **Time Management:** Start and end on time. Respect everyone's time by adhering to the schedule.
- ✓ **Engagement:** Encourage active participation. Listen to diverse opinions, promote discussion, and avoid domination by a few individuals.
- ✓ **Action Items and Follow-up:** Summarize action points and responsibilities at the meeting's end. Follow up on progress and outcomes after the meeting.

SECTION 2: PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Is a Meeting Necessary?

Consider whether a meeting is the most effective way to achieve the goal. Sometimes, an email, a brief discussion, or a different communication method could suffice. When planning a meeting, follow these steps:

- ✓ **Purpose and Goal:** Define the specific objective. Is it for decision-making, brainstorming, updates, or problem-solving?
- ✓ **Attendees:** Identify who needs to be present based on their role and how they can contribute to achieving the meeting's purpose.
- ✓ **Agenda Creation:** Develop a clear agenda, listing topics, timeframes, and responsible parties. Share this agenda prior to the meeting.
- ✓ **Logistics:** Choose an appropriate time, duration, and location. Consider time zones if it's a virtual meeting.

SECTION 3: CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- ✓ **Preparation:** Review the agenda and required materials. Ensure the meeting space/technology is set up and functioning correctly.
- ✓ **Start Strong:** Begin the meeting on time. Summarize the purpose and agenda to set the tone.
- ✓ **Facilitation:** Guide the discussion by sticking to the agenda, encouraging participation, and keeping the conversation focused.

DURING THE MEETING:

- ✓ **Active Listening:** Ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Encourage active listening and avoid interruptions.
- ✓ **Time Management:** Keep discussions on schedule. Use time limits for each agenda item to ensure everything is covered.

AFTER THE MEETING:

- ✓ **Recap and Assign Actions:** Summarize key points and action items. Assign responsibilities and deadlines.
- ✓ **Follow-up:** Send meeting notes, action items, and any relevant documents to participants. Follow up on the action items in the following days.

QUICK GUIDE TO ROBERT'S RULES:

Robert's Rules of Order is a widely used guide for conducting meetings effectively and fairly. Here's a brief guide to common terms and their purposes:

MOTION:

- Purpose: A proposal made by a member during a meeting to take a specific action or address an issue.
 - Usually in the form of, "I move to {*suggested action*}"
 - If someone suggests an action but wasn't in a form of a motion, you may hear, "So moved."
- When to Use: When there's a need for the group to make a decision or take action on a particular matter.

SECOND:

- Purpose: To support a motion by indicating a willingness for it to be discussed and considered by the assembly.
- When to Use: Following a motion, if a second member supports the motion, it can be discussed and considered.

AMENDMENT:

- Purpose: A proposal to modify, add, or delete specific words or provisions within a motion.
- When to Use: When a member wants to change or improve a motion under discussion.

POINT OF ORDER:

- Purpose: Used when a member believes that the rules of the assembly or meeting are being violated or incorrectly applied.
- When to Use: When there is a breach of procedural rules or when someone is not adhering to the established meeting guidelines.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY:

- Purpose: A request for information regarding the rules or procedures of the meeting.
- When to Use: When a member seeks clarification about the correct procedure to handle a particular situation in the meeting.

ADJOURN:

- Purpose: To formally end the meeting.
- When to Use: When the meeting is concluded or when it's time to wrap up the session.

POINT OF INFORMATION:

- Purpose: To request factual information or clarification about a matter being discussed.
- When to Use: When a member needs clarification or information that can aid in the discussion or decision-making process.

QUORUM:

- Purpose: The minimum number of members required to be present to conduct official business in a meeting.
- When to Use: Essential to determine whether there are enough members present to make decisions or conduct business.

DIVISION OF THE HOUSE:

- Purpose: To call for a formal vote when the chair's decision on a voice vote is unclear or when members want a more precise count. (Usually called out as "I call for Division")
- When to Use: When there's doubt about the outcome of a voice vote or when a more accurate count is necessary.

WITHDRAW:

- Purpose: To remove a motion before it has been discussed or voted upon.
- When to Use: When a member no longer wishes to pursue the motion, they can withdraw it from consideration.

Understanding these terms and when to use them can significantly improve the efficiency and fairness of meetings while adhering to established rules of order and procedure.

USING THE CONSENSUS MODEL FOR MEETINGS:

The consensus model is a collaborative decision-making approach aimed at reaching agreement among all participants or a substantial majority in a group. Here's a brief guide to using the consensus model for running meetings:

1. ESTABLISH SHARED OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Define the meeting's purpose and the specific goals to be achieved. Ensure all participants have a clear understanding of the meeting's objectives. This would be outlined in your agenda.

2. INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION:

- ✓ Encourage open participation and ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion. Create an environment where all voices are heard and valued.

3. ACTIVE LISTENING AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION:

- ✓ Foster an atmosphere of active listening and respectful communication. Encourage participants to express their thoughts and opinions while actively listening to others.

4. SEEK COMMON GROUND:

- ✓ Focus on identifying common ground and shared interests among the group. Encourage discussion to find solutions that address everyone's concerns.

5. COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING:

- ✓ Encourage collaborative problem-solving by exploring various options and alternatives. Aim to find solutions that meet the collective needs and address potential objections.

6. FACILITATION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING:

- ✓ Utilize the facilitator to guide the discussion, maintain focus, and ensure that everyone's opinions are considered. The facilitator can help build consensus by summarizing key points, identifying areas of agreement, and proposing potential compromises.

7. ADDRESSING CONCERNS:

- ✓ Address any concerns or objections constructively. Encourage individuals to voice their reservations and work collectively to find resolutions or modifications that address these concerns.

8. TEST FOR CONSENSUS:

- ✓ Once discussions have reached a point of potential agreement, check for consensus by summarizing the proposed decision or solution. Ask if there are any remaining objections or reservations.

9. ADAPT AND MODIFY:

- ✓ Be open to modifying the proposed solution to accommodate concerns if necessary. Adapt the solution to ensure it aligns with the group's collective agreement.

10. DOCUMENT AND FOLLOW-UP:

- ✓ Document the agreed-upon decisions and action points. Ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and agree on a follow-up plan.

Consensus-based decision-making requires time and patience but often results in decisions that are more widely accepted and supported by the group. It emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, and the collective wisdom of the participants.

A SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON OF ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER AND CONSENSUS MEETINGS:

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

DECISION MAKING:

- Majority vote decides decisions.

HIERARCHY:

- Typically, there's a clear leadership structure (chairperson, secretary) guiding the meeting.

DEBATE AND DISCUSSION:

- Encourages formal debate and discussion where members take turns speaking, and the chairperson maintains order.

MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS:

- Members make motions, which need a second to proceed, and may be amended.

VOTING:

- Usually, decisions are made by a vote, often a simple majority.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE:

- Follows strict procedural rules for discussions, such as motions, seconds, debate, and voting.

CONSENSUS MEETINGS

DECISION MAKING:

- Aims to reach agreement among all participants or a substantial majority.

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE:

- Typically a more egalitarian structure where decisions are made collectively.

DISCUSSION PROCESS:

- Emphasizes open discussion and dialogue, seeking common ground and mutual agreement.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:

- Focuses on finding solutions that address concerns and objections to achieve collective agreement.

DECISION-MAKING METHOD:

- Strives for unanimous agreement, ensuring that everyone is satisfied with the outcome or can live with the decision.

FACILITATION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING:

- Often utilizes a facilitator to guide discussions and summarize key points, helping build agreement.

KEY DIFFERENCES:

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:

- Robert's Rules: Emphasizes voting and majority decisions.
- Consensus Meetings: Aim for agreement or consent from all or a substantial majority of participants.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE:

- Robert's Rules: Often follows a more structured hierarchy with a designated chairperson.
- Consensus Meetings: Tends to involve more shared leadership and collaboration.

DISCUSSION STYLE:

- Robert's Rules: Formalized debate structure with rules and order.
- Consensus Meetings: Focuses on open dialogue and finding common ground among participants.

OBJECTIVE:

- Robert's Rules: To efficiently make decisions and proceed with the business at hand.
- Consensus Meetings: To ensure decisions are inclusive and widely accepted by the group.

COMMONALITY:

Both Robert's Rules and Consensus Meetings aim to ensure fair decision-making, but they use different approaches to achieve this goal. While Robert's Rules focus on structured procedural guidelines and voting, Consensus Meetings emphasize collaboration, open dialogue, and seeking agreement among all participants.

