

# Improving Club Meetings

## **Objectives:**

- Identify important elements of productive meetings
- Identify how to overcome common meeting obstacles
- Review effective meeting tools and techniques

## **Organization:**

- For each sub-topic there is an overview explaining the sub-topic in some detail
- (If applicable) One or more suggestions or tips for introducing the sub-topic within the club
- Resources to existing documentation that supports the material presented

## **Overview:**

Lengthy/boring meetings are the number one reason former members cite for dropping out of their Lions clubs. Meetings are a significant part of the Lions club experience and have a big impact on how the association is perceived by members. Meetings are also important to the efficient functioning of your club. Holding effective meetings will help you accomplish two things:

1. Keep members interested
2. Keep your club running smoothly

## **Sub-topics:**

1. Meeting Types
2. Guidelines for Meeting Management
3. Meeting Management Ground Rules
4. Time Management Techniques
5. Understanding the Motivation Level of Participants
6. Quick Ideas for Improving Meeting Atmosphere

## **Common Questions Related to the Topic:**

- How do I get members more involved?
- How can I make our meetings end on time?
- What activities should be done at the meeting?

## Meeting Types

An effective meeting needs to have a purpose. The purpose of the meeting will determine all other factors of the meeting. Examine the chart below to see if your meeting style fits the purpose.

	<b>INFORMATIONAL</b>	<b>TEAM/ DECISION-MAKING</b>	<b>MOTIVATIONAL</b>
<b>Number Attending</b>	Any number	12 or less (ideal)	Any number
<b>Participants</b>	Based on: Need to know	Based on: Knowledge and Ability to contribute	Based on: Who will benefit from message
<b>Communication Process</b>	One-way: Leader to participants with some interaction	Interactive: Discussion and decision making among all attending	Mainly one-way, some interaction
<b>Room Set-Up</b>	Classroom	U-Shape or Conference Room	Classroom
<b>Most Effective Leadership Style</b>	Authoritative	Participative	Inspirational
<b>Emphasis</b>	Content	Interaction Problem Solving	Renewal
<b>Keys to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and preparation of information presented</li> <li>• Opportunities to apply information and ask questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate that supports open, free expression</li> <li>• Group decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not always an objective, but may be an outcome; build self-esteem</li> </ul>

# Guidelines for Meeting Management

## *The Necessary Steps to an Effective Meeting*

### **BEFORE THE MEETING**

1. Define Objectives. (For example, is your meeting informational, decision-making or motivational)?
2. Contact speakers and participants to confirm availability (2-4 weeks ahead)
3. Schedule meeting location and arrange for equipment and refreshments
4. Prepare agenda (This may involve preparing background materials)
5. Distribute agenda and necessary background materials one week before meeting
6. Contact any nonmembers who need to be included
7. Arrive early and make final check of meeting room (If leader can't arrive early, identify someone else who can)
8. Move tables and chairs in a new configuration to encourage mixing

### **DURING THE MEETING**

1. Start promptly (State main purpose and how it is to be accomplished)
2. Assign roles (Recorder/Timekeeper/Scribe/Ground Rules Referee)
3. Follow agenda
4. Elicit participation
5. Manage use of time
6. Help resolve conflicts
7. Clarify action to be taken and summarize results
8. Accept ideas for next agenda
9. Set time and place for next meeting – if necessary

### **AFTER THE MEETING**

1. Restore the room and return equipment
2. Evaluate effectiveness of meeting
3. Prepare and distribute minutes
4. Follow up on personal action items and with others who were assigned action items

# Meeting Management Ground Rules

## Why?

- To allow the group to set its own expectations for individual and group behavior in meetings
- To gain support for the group to help monitor individual and group behavior
- To encourage good group process and results due to productive behavior in meetings

## How?

- The group may brainstorm and agree upon its own ground rules during initial meetings
- The leader/facilitator may suggest a few ground rules, but buy-in is increased when the group generates most of the rules
- In some cases, the group may be prompted by common ground rules to get started
- The group may add and/or modify ground rules over time

## Sample Ground Rules

- We will focus on work issues and behaviors, not people
- We will start and end meetings on time
- We will limit our discussions to the stated agenda item
- We will respect the confidentiality of discussions during our meetings
- We will allow everyone to have and state an opinion
- We will state our opinions once each, avoiding repetition
- We will not interrupt one another
- Opinions will be stated efficiently, allowing everyone equal time
- We will refer an item to a subgroup or subcommittee for further investigation if it is dominating too much time in a meeting
- We will each commit to working within the framework of group decisions
- Our meetings will be fun not drudgery

## Time Management Techniques

- Prioritize agenda items (most important first)
- Distribute detailed materials and read before meetings
- Assign members to work in subgroups (during or between meetings)
- Use agendas with time limits on each item, and a timekeeper prompting the group when it is time to move on
- Discussion procedures (i.e. limits on how many times or how long each person may speak)
- Limit discussion to agenda item
- Start and end on time
- Schedule a specific time for socializing before or after the meeting

## Quick Ideas for Improving Meeting Atmosphere:

### ***Increase Involvement***

- **Share your Enthusiasm** – Attitude is infectious. How you feel about making positive changes to your club will affect how members respond. Be upbeat and enthusiastic -- your members will be motivated to support your efforts.
- **Visit Another Club** – The route to another club can be a road rally with clues for stops on the way. This fun way to help members become acquainted informally with the leadership team and they can ask questions about new ideas or procedures seen at another club meeting.
- **Share Praise Freely** – Important to *all* members, and especially new members, is positive reinforcement for a job done well. Often, simple acknowledgements are best – a special thank you during a club or committee meeting, a personal note of thanks, a word of encouragement. Consider creating a “Kudos” column in your newsletter or Web site to list those members who have done their jobs well, made great suggestions, or gone above and beyond the call of duty.
- **Find the Key to Involvement** – You want to involve each member in your club by getting to know them and selecting activities that they want to join. Active involvement is necessary to keep new members. Socialize with members during and outside of meetings. Share happy occasions – birthdays, anniversaries, a special achievement or the achievement of a spouse or child. The club newsletter and Web site are great ways to note these special occasions.
- **Use a member to give a program** – make members feel needed and important. Train them for future leadership roles

- **Communicate Constantly** – Open communication is vitally important to the success of your club. It creates a comfortable, productive environment that will motivate members to do their best. Encouraging input from members (see below) and using your club meetings, newsletter and Web site to communicate club happenings will help you with this task.

## ***Club Dynamics***

- **Attendance Cues** – Paying careful attention to attendance trends can help uncover retention problems. Not attending meetings is one of the first signs of lack of member interest. Confer with your secretary and get a list of members who are “slipping.” If they have missed three meetings or more in a row, call them to find out why. Personally calling them will show that you care about them.
- **Retention is for All Members** – While making sure new members feel welcomed, involved and comfortable, it is important to remember long-term members. As people belong to an organization for a longer period of time, their goals and needs may change. Let long-time members know that their continued membership is important by periodically asking them if they are still satisfied with the club.
- **Scramble Seating Arrangements** – Change seating arrangements at meetings from time to time to allow all members to become better acquainted. Try having your greeter or membership chair hand out poker chips or cards with a number that corresponds to a seat. There should be a number for every member including at large or associate. Then have a drawing at the end of the meeting that includes all of the seats. If no one is in the seat then the money or a percentage of it rolls over into next meeting. If a person's number is drawn but they are not in their corresponding seat, then they don't get the money and it rolls over as well.
- **Lion on the Month** – Highlight one member each month and have them give a presentation about something in their life. It could be business, their family, anything.
- **New Members Make Great Greeters** – Have new members serve as greeters for club functions for the first several weeks of their membership. It's a great way for them to meet all club members.
- **Make it Fun** – Have some fun while encouraging members to mix with their fellow members. Before a club meeting begins, select a member to be the “Secret Lion.” In a clique-free club everyone mingles freely and will eventually meet the Secret Lion. As the meeting nears a close, you ask the Secret Lion to identify those members who never made contact, and encourage the Tail Twister to humorously levy a fine. Done with a light touch, the Secret Lion method gets the “no- cliques” message across.

## ***Focus on Meetings***

- **Think Positively** – When considering any changes to your club, keep a positive attitude. Your club might be steeped in tradition and used to doing things a certain way, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try something new. Today's “experiment” could be tomorrow's new tradition.

- **Newsworthy Newsletters and Web Sites** – Make your club’s newsletter and Web site a valuable source of information for all members. Use these devices to reinforce items mentioned during meetings, or more importantly, to communicate details of agenda items that would slow your meetings down. Let members know that your newsletter and Web site are important sources of club news and encourage use.
- **Try Trimming Time** – Do you feel that your agenda is as lean as it can be, but your meetings are still running long? Examine the *content* of your agenda items and try trimming just a little time from a few items. Those small time adjustments will add up. Communicate your shortening of agenda items to all affected, so they can plan accordingly.
- **Programs in a Pinch** - Have a few programs ready that can be put on quickly and easily in the event of a last minute cancellation. Some ideas for quick programs include: presenting the International Program video and discussing how your club is contributing to the association’s goals for the year, holding a membership recruitment “summit” and brainstorming creative ways your club can recruit new members, or having your public relations chairman report on the status of publicity efforts and your club’s perception in the community. You can also ask members if they have any “non-Lion” programs one of them would be willing to present at the last minute if requested. Keep a list of these “emergency” programs on hand and you’ll be prepared to act quickly.
- **Use Your Gavel** – Do you use your gavel, or are you intimidated to call order with it? Using your gavel is one of the quickest, easiest ways to get the attention of your members and allow you to get your meeting back on track.
- **Mix it Up** – Keep your club meetings fresh by trying something new every once in awhile. Consider having people change where they sit every few meetings to encourage camaraderie with new people, add a new quick agenda item to boost morale (such as suggestion of the month or recognizing a member who went beyond the call of duty) or change the order of your agenda items (make sure everyone involved knows if you do this so they will be prepared!).
- **Play Music** - In order to kick off a membership drive in one club had a musical band of 5 march around their meeting room with some simple banners. One stating their new member goal and the other asking, “Who have you asked?” They planned this as a surprise to the membership and it surely was. It had the desired effect of livening things up!
- **Change Meeting Places** – By changing locations you will also give a new perspective to the meeting. Possible venues include different restaurants, parks, hotels etc.
- **Give Ownership** – Allow members to lead the activities. This will make the members feel needed and increase their motivation to do more in the club.
- **Visit Other Clubs** – This is a great way to get new ideas for your club. One club actually surprised all their members. They had everyone ride a bus to various places in town. Each destination had a clue of where to go next. The final destination was another Lions club meeting.

***Resources:***

1. Focus on Meetings: Smart Strategies for Keeping Your Members on Track. President's Retention Campaign. July 2001.
2. Focus on Involvement: Smart Strategies for Keeping Your Members Involved in Your Club. President's Retention Campaign. July 2001.
3. Focus on Club Dynamics: Smart Strategies for Handling Cliques and Politics. President's Retention Campaign. July 2001.