

The chairman's job...

Your duty as a chairman is to maintain control of a meeting and enable meeting members to participate in making decisions. It is **NOT** your duty to impose your will on the members. With that in mind, here are several tips that can assist you in chairing a meeting effectively.

Start on Time

Starting late punishes those who arrive on time. People tend to arrive at the time they know the meeting will start, not at the time it was called. Get a reputation for starting on time, and people will quickly learn to be punctual. You, as chairman, will need to arrive ahead of time to get set up.

Keep Discussion on Topic

This is the most important factor in controlling a meeting.

If someone starts to get off topic, get them back on track immediately, but tactfully, by commenting, "That's a good point, Jack, but right now we have to decide where we will hold the banquet," or, "Excuse me, Joan, but could you save that point until later? The topic right now is who will be the guest speaker."

Getting a motion on the floor as soon as possible during a discussion will help keep the discussion on track. Summarize discussions often to keep everyone clear on what has been decided and what the decision remaining is.

Limit discussion by allowing only new opinions, facts or ideas to be presented. "Does anyone have a point that has not been mentioned yet?"

Some meetings have at least one individual who tries to monopolize the discussion. Control them by saying, "Let's hear from some of the other members first, Jane," or "I'd like to limit everyone to speaking just once on a topic, Tom."

Make Decisions Quickly

Make sure everyone knows what the problem is. Don't waste time on opinions if you can get the facts, e.g., "I think the hall is fairly cheap and is probably available on the



weekend," versus "The hall costs \$35 and is available Thursday and Friday nights only."

Get a motion on the floor quickly. You can facilitate this by saying, "Would someone please move that we have a mall display."

Call a vote as soon as you see there are no new facts or points being made. (Sixty percent of people decide on a motion within 60 seconds after it's made.)

Involve Everyone

If the group is small, go around the circle seeking each person's ideas. Ask quiet members directly what their feelings are on the topic. If the group is large, use buzz groups, brainstorming groups, and surveys to provide members an opportunity to provide input.

Note that by limiting talkative members, you will encourage quieter members.

Use Parliamentary Procedure

The smaller the group, the less formal the meeting and vice versa. In a small group, you could finalize the discussion by saying, "It looks like

everyone is in favour of having a mall display, then."

Be Aware of the Meeting Environment

Set chairs up in a circle for small groups and in a "U"-shape for groups up to 30, so that everyone can see everyone else. Set up only as many chairs as there are people.

Ensure that the temperature, lighting, ventilation and sound are suitable.

It is easier for antagonists to get in a "head-to-head" confrontation when sitting across from each other. Sit them beside each other and they will find it more difficult to argue.

End on Time

People attend meetings to socialize, not just for business. By keeping the meeting strictly to business, you can have time after the meeting for "official" socializing. (Meetings over two hours long are for martyrs only).

If you go over schedule, the business was either covered too slowly or there were too many items on the agenda.