



Club Meetings



A strong, vibrant club has lots of people having a good time laughing and enjoying each other's company in a friendly, supportive environment. Following are some ways to help achieve good productive meetings where members enjoy fun and fellowship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever walked into a room of people and right away felt welcomed? Chances are that someone greeted you as you entered and showed their appreciation for you being there. The simple act of greeting people and genuinely showing your appreciation can speak volumes about you and your club!

This is the foundation upon which you can build a sense of belonging. If the president is organized, the meeting is prepared and ready. The President can personally focus on the club's greatest asset, its volunteers.

And what are the rest of the people doing? They are talking with each other, they are laughing, they are enjoying a great meal, they are entertained and they are appreciated! Is your Club like that? It can be with the proper plan and with people who know how to attract other people.

Lots of members in attendance mean more involvement in club activities, more interested volunteers and more community resources. It becomes a place where everyone would be proud to invite a new member.

Types of Meetings

- General Membership Meetings – to energize enthusiasm for volunteering through good fun, food and fellowship
 - The only business is to elect officers, establish dues or change club bylaws
- Board of Directors Meetings – to conduct the business of the Club
 - The business is to establish policies, oversee membership, sanction projects and oversee budget and expenses.
- Committee Meetings – to plan the events and implement action



2. ATTENDANCE – a measure of success

You probably agree that attendance at your Club meetings is important or you wouldn't be reading this section. Which of the following would you consider most important for your Club?

- A member who attends has greater “ownership” in outreach
- Help develop better fellowship
- Makes it easier to get good programs and better speakers
- Facilitates the recruiting of new members
- Good attendance provides more networking opportunities
- Provides more volunteers for club projects
- Builds a positive club image
- Provides greater opportunity for input and new ideas
- Makes meetings more fun



3. ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE – Eliminate the Negative

- Do start your meetings on time and end on time. Respect your members who attend by respecting their time.
- Do not conduct business, except for brief announcements at club meetings.
- Do use a pre-printed agenda. Have a number of club agenda photocopies and simply fill in names, announcements, program, etc. each week. This agenda can be turned over to your newsletter/email person to highlight coming events.
- Do not put down members for shortcomings in front of others! But do pat them on the back in front of others for a job well done!
- Do have a great program and promote the coming program in your email newsletter. Use fun, interesting program ideas.

- Do not ignore new members and guests. Treat them as you would like to be treated; make them feel appreciated!
- Do ask your members to invite their friends, co-workers and relatives. Show your appreciation when they come and recognize them in newsletter emails.
- Do not complain at meetings; do not be a pessimist. If a challenge exists, work behind the scenes to correct it.
- Do give the "Sergeant at Arms" and/or the "Fellowship Committee" the charge of boosting attendance and show attendance results.

4. FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The purpose of the fellowship committee is to assist in making meetings fun and inviting to members and their guests. The committee usually consists of one to four people who are outgoing, fun and creative. Their duties and responsibilities are:

- To promote Club meeting attendance.
- To make preparations for the social side of meetings, to stimulate fellowship and to welcome Club members and guests.
- To plan a well-rounded program of social functions.
- To plan and promote inter-club visits.

When making plans the committee should determine what is going to be done, who is going to do it and when it is going to be completed.

The Fellowship Committee's "charge" is to increase attendance; their success (and your Club's) is measured by attendance records.



5. SERGEANT AT ARMS

The Sergeant at Arms can also be a key to creating an atmosphere that is inviting to members and guests. The Sergeant at Arms:

- Helps the President keep order during club meetings
- Greets members and guests at the door as they arrive; shake hands with every member and guest.
- Pre-set club meetings with banners, flags, bell & gavel.
- Often collects "fines" for the purpose of having fun.

Note on "fining": Although increased club finances are a side benefit, this should not be the focus nor should laughter ever be at the expense of someone feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed by being fined. A fun-loving, friendly "fine master" is the key to making this fun. A quarter is a common fine. A club

president should not be fined in order to respect the office and the effort and initiative it takes to lead a club.

“Fines for Pessimism”: A new method of fining is emerging among Optimists. Remarks of a “pessimist” nature are finable. Using dirty words (pessimist words) like, “but”, “can’t”, “won’t”, “we can’t do it that way”, etc. are finable offenses. Occasionally members who exude an extraordinary show of optimism receive a “fine exemption” card. Fines for frowns, exemption card for smiles.

6. GREAT PROGRAMS

Fun, unusual programs can gain member attention and peak member’s interest in attending. Try using entertainment, especially including kids, magicians, palm-readers, fortune tellers, masseuses, puppeteers and anything out of the ordinary. Also consider “theme days” perhaps an ethnic meal and décor from a different Country every week. Each week you might commemorate special weeks or days of the year. A few occasions from a 2006 list of many are following:

- **Optimist Day** At your first meeting tell everyone how we are “Bringing Out the Best in Kids!”
- **Media Day** Recognize a radio, newspaper, or TV station that is known for reporting the Positive side of news – give an award
- **Columbus Day** (traditional), (October)
- **National Boss Day**, (October)
- **United Nations Day**, October 24.
- **Halloween**, October 31.
- **Veteran’s Day**, November 11
- **Thanksgiving Day**, (November)
- **Christmas**, December 25
- **Hanukkah**, (December)
- **Groundhog Day**, February 2
- **Lincoln's Birthday**, February 12
- **Valentine's Day**, February 14
- **President’s Day**, (February)
- **St. Patrick's Day**, March 17
- **April Fools's Day**, April 1
- **Earth Day**, (April)
- **Arbor Day**, (May)
- **Mothers' Day**, second Sunday in May
- **Victoria Day** (Canada) May 22
- **Memorial Day**, (May)
- **Fathers' Day**, third Sunday in June
- **St. Jean Baptiste** (Quebec) June 24
- **Canada Day**, July 1
- **Independence Day**, July 4
- **Parents' Day**, fourth Sunday in July
- **Labor Day**, (September)
- **Grandparents' Day**, Sunday after Labor Day
- **Rosh Hashanah**

7. IDEAS FOR BOOSTING ATTENDANCE

- a. **Mystery Handshake:** Each week the President or Fellowship Chair secretly appoints someone to be the "Mystery Hand shaker" and assigns a number such as 3rd. This person waits for others to approach and the 3rd person to shake their hand at a meeting wins a "hand shaker" prize.
- b. **Attend or Miss Poker:** Each week the members in attendance select a card from one or more poker decks. Do this each week for 5-8 weeks. At the end of this period, the member who is present at a pre-determined date with the best poker hand wins!
- c. **Optimist of the Week:** This is a small certificate awarded each week or whenever appropriate to the member who shows the greatest act of optimism in the previous week. For example, getting their name in the local newspaper; being most enthusiastic at a club activity or helping a young person could qualify.
- d. **Joke of the Week:** Each week one to three members could share their "joke of the week." If club members like it they give a "thumbs up", if they don't it's a "thumbs down" and some appropriate moaning.
- e. **Brag Session:** Each Optimist has a chance to pay a small contribution to "brag" about a positive thing that happened in their own or someone else's life.



- f. **Member Spotlight:** Each week a member is invited to tell a little about themselves to the general membership and then a very brief member highlight goes in the newsletter/email. If a program does not show up, perhaps three members could give their brief biography.
- g. **Raffles:** Have a "second chance" drawing after the normal 50/50 (or 40% for club/40% for weekly winner/20% for 2nd chance winner) winner has been chosen. On the first of each month draw a ticket from the previous month's losers to win 20% of the previous month's jack pot.
- h. **Sporting Competition:** Join with the Membership Committee and play a game. For example Baseball: Divide into teams with appropriate names, colors, baseball equipment, etc. Nine week (each week an inning) duration with "single" attendance, an additional "double" for bringing a guest and a "home run" for signing a new member! Play Ball!

8. BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Board meetings are conducted by the use of an agenda, prepared in advance, which is shared with all Board Members. The Board of Directors conducts the business of the club and usually meets monthly.

The Board is elected by the Members of the Club. They are elected in April and prepare to take office on October 1st. The Board consists of the President (who presides), the vice presidents, the secretary-treasurer (some large clubs split this office into a secretary and a treasurer) and the directors-at-large (usually 4-8 persons).

The Board conducts the business of the Club. It makes policy, adopts programs and projects, oversees membership and supervises revenue and expenses by adopting and using a budget. The Board often rules on recommendations from Club Committees.

9. CLUB COMMITTEES

The work of the Club is done by committees. Committees are appointed by the president and are responsible to the Board. Committees are run by a Chair who reports to the Board. Sometimes a Vice President will oversee the operation of several committees.

Club committees may be divided into “external” (Public Relations, Youth Activities, Fundraising or New Club Building) and “internal” (Membership, Finance, Email/website editor). They may also be classified as Administrative or Operations.

It is important to give “ownership” to committees for operations. The Board should take care not to interfere with progress but to support or modify committee actions.

General Membership meetings should not be used to plan or discuss projects. That is the job of committees. General Membership meetings are for fun and to charge-up and invigorate members!

“Show me a lot of Optimists having fun and I’ll show you a successful club!”



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