Working with Your Board of Directors

Working effectively with a chapter’s board members is a key to the success of your chapter.

Board Orientation
It’s crucial to get your newly elected directors and officers off on the right foot. It is important to provide orientation training that includes the following:

- **Job Description** – What’s expected of each board member?
- **Board Responsibilities** – What is your board’s focus? Providing timely and relevant programs? Strengthening membership numbers? Outline your chapter’s mission, vision and goals. Be sure to explain the legal duties.
- **Board Member Expectations** – Clearly define what you expect of your board members. Do they need to attend all board meetings? Do they need to chair any committees? Written expectations are best.
- **Board/Staff Relationship** – If your chapter has staff, make sure to describe their duties and responsibilities. Don’t assume that new board members will realize “who does what.” Working together as a team is important.

How to Run Efficient Board Meetings

- **Efficiency is Key**
  - Running effective meetings will keep members coming back.
  - Effective meetings will keep the chapter progressing and growing.
- **Preparations Before the Meeting**
  - Determine the purpose of the meeting
  - Develop the agenda
  - Board agenda and materials distribution
  - Meeting time considerations
  - Post meeting and follow up
- **Develop Agenda**
  - Prioritize agenda items
    - Mix up between short, easy-to-handle items and the more complicated items
    - Put a few easy things first to get the meeting rolling in a positive direction at a fast pace
  - List goal or action of each item
    - Place on the agenda the expected action that will be taken with each item. If you will be voting on that particular piece, say so. If you will only be opening a discussion on it, make it clear. (Ex: “For discussion” or “For consideration”, etc.)
  - Balance of items and guarding against overload
• Make sure the agenda is manageable. If it gets too big, look for items that can wait until another time.
• Can a small group be put in charge of an item to bring back information or to make the decision themselves? Delegate when possible.

• Board Materials
  o Should be provided to Directors one week prior to the meeting
  o Meant to inform the Board on the items that will be covered during the meeting
  o Synopses of reports should be thorough, but to the point

• Meeting Times
  o Set a standard meeting time and time limit, and stick to it if possible.
  o Members will be more likely to attend meetings if you make them productive, predictable, and time effective.
  o Make meeting as accessible as possible to all members.

• Set the flow of the meeting
  o Put limits on time for less important issues
  o Request that in-depth issues be assigned to task groups
  o Give everyone a voice

• Keep on Task
  o Stick to the agenda
  o Keep conversation focused on the topic
  o Start on time, end on time
  o Make assignments and note follow up

• General Rules for Good Meetings
  o Be prepared
  o Provide basic overview of Robert's Rules of Order
  o Reach a conclusion/resolution and move on
  o Record the minutes
  o Have a copy of bylaws and policy handbook to reference
  o President should keep the meeting moving
  o Focus on the goals using mission to guide decision making
  o Communicate effectively
  o Focus on solutions, not problems
  o Remain respectful - don’t personalize issues
  o Praise people twice as much as you criticize

• Keep Minutes
  o Remember that minutes should be detailed enough that anyone can read them and know what decisions were made by the Board
  o Minutes also serve as a historical document of your chapter’s growth

• End the Meeting
  o Task assignments
    ▪ Restate or verify who is needing to accomplish tasks before the next meeting
  o Debriefing
    ▪ Very quickly check in with Directors and ask what worked well about the meeting and what did not

• After the Meeting
  o Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting
  o Distribute minutes
    ▪ Timeliness is necessary
  o Delegation of decisions
    ▪ Follow-up on delegation decisions

10 Moves to Improve Board Meeting Productivity
1. If feasible, arrange a meeting of the board officers two weeks before the full board meeting to preview it.
2. Ten days before the board meeting, mail or e-mail the agenda and a summary of issues requiring a board vote.
3. Meet with the chairperson a day or two prior to the meeting to review the agenda, discuss any changes or additions, ensure you have all support information ready and answer questions.
4. Schedule the secretary or a staff person to take minutes and record important action items.
5. Provide the President with a list of action items that require a vote of the full board. Ask the President to make assignments or appointments for projects that require attention, as well as deadlines for each task.
6. Poll your board as to financial information or specific reports they would like to see. Then have those items ready at or before the meeting.
7. When using an overhead display or a laptop computer, make sure the screen can be seen from all seats. Provide attendees with hard-copy backups as reference and to make notes. Be prepared to offer support information for charts, graphs or other displays.
8. Offer to assist directors/committee chairs in preparing meeting reports.
9. At each meeting, provide board folders for each attendee with current information to which they can refer.
10. Have a person on hand during the meeting to make copies, check facts or perform other tasks as needed so that you do not have to leave the meeting to do so.