

THE CHALLENGE:

RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

You will spend too much of your time in meetings to do them by accident. To be most effective with this important skill, familiarize yourself with *Robert's Rules of Order* for formal meetings and *How to Make Meetings Work* (Doyle and Strauss) for a more informal *interactive method* of meetings.

Meetings contain two very important components: *process* (the skill sets employed to reach an actionable position) and *emotion* (the passion that drives actionable position). Separating these two is necessary. Too much process often leads to little action and too much emotion can lead to *no action* or *wrong* actions. *Regardless of the process chosen, every meeting needs:*

Reason(s) to meet. This is why we are taking the time to meet now. The agenda should be open to the members until it is published. People in the 21st century are too busy to waste their time in meetings they do not deem valuable.

A published agenda at least 24 hours in advance. It can be as simple as a prioritized list of topics to be discussed or as well defined as these notes indicate. Know what you are meeting about, for how long, and what you hope to accomplish when it is over, at least two days before the meeting. Meeting without the answers to these questions is a waste of everyone's time! *Tip: Never meet without an agenda. If you are not in charge of the meeting and there is no agenda, make your first item of business to create one.*

Time-lined. Good agendas are time-lined. Often it is difficult to reach a solution until the "last minute." Agreeing to a time limit on the discussion of each item will create many "last minutes" in your agenda to increase action.

When the time is up, vote, send to—or back to—committee, or table to a future time-lined agenda. Agreeing to the time-line as the first item of business instills a sense of importance to the meeting and confidence in the leadership.

Seating arrangements. Arrange the room to meet the agenda's needs. It is acceptable to move the chairs several times during the meeting. There are four basic configurations for chairs and each promotes a different interaction:

THEATER STYLE (all seats face the front of the room, used for formal agenda and transferring information from the front back. Well controlled and can move an agenda quickly)

CIRCLES (allows participants to informally see one another and to interact more freely; large groups use several circles then report and consolidate their findings; good for decision-making and processing)

HORSESHOE (allows participants to see one another but also offers an opportunity to focus the entire group on a screen or person; it is good for a focused but informal interactive experience; this setup is focused but informal with control)

NO CHAIRS OR STANDING (a "standing" meeting keeps things focused and moving quickly).

A specific time to begin and end. Busy people need to know how to plan their day's activities. Hosting meetings with specific beginnings and endings they can count on makes your meeting more inviting.

A CHECKLIST FOR RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

- Reason(s) for meeting
- Published agenda 24 hours in advance
- Time-lined
- Seating arrangements for each agenda item
- Specific time to begin and end

