



# How to Structure an Effective Agenda

When thinking about your meeting, it is best to structure the agenda to follow a specific flow that begins with reading the minutes from the previous meeting and ends by addressing the easiest items on the agenda. Thus, handling the most difficult or important items in the middle of your meeting is best when attendance is usually at its peak.

1. Minutes
2. Announcements
3. Reports
4. Discussion items
5. Easiest items

To develop your agenda, consider the following three parts:

## **The Start-Up Period**

It is important to send your meeting agenda to membership prior to the meeting to allow them access to the pertinent items being discussed at the meeting.

This first section of the agenda should include the date, time, and location of the meeting along with the objective. Follow with the reading of the minutes from the previous meeting. The opening statement is a brief commentary made by the leader of the meeting. This is a one to two minute talk that establishes the direction of the meeting.

## **The Work Period**

The next items to be covered are current issues. This is where the bulk of the meeting will occur. If there are any reports to be given by committee members, decisions to be made, or responsibilities to be assigned, this is where they will occur.

Reports serve two purposes. The present information that is either new or asked for previously. They can also provide information necessary to make a decision.

A discussion period allows the participants to consider all of the issue. Please allow enough structured time for this period, as it is essential to the meetings success.

The decision period is when a vote is taken or recommendations are made. This is also when responsibilities are assigned. If participants feel they need more information, the issue may be tabled until the next meeting and someone may be assigned to research further.

## **The Closing Period**

Any other business should be the easiest to handle. At this point the participants begin to lose their focus and attendance starts to drop off. Included during this time is the date, time and location of the next meeting. Follow with an official adjournment.

When you prepare and communicate an agenda in advance, your meetings will become much more productive and effective achieving the goals you've set.