

# Leading a Top Flight Meeting

Supplement to the publication “Enhancing Committee Effectiveness” by John F. Schlegel

## Leadership Development Program

for the

## American Trucking Associations Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs

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# ***Leading a Top-Flight Meeting***

## ***Effective Committee Chairs Must***

- Motivate people to participate
- Chair meetings effectively
- Assure committee performance

## ***Effective Meetings are the Result of***

- Preparing for the meeting
  - Don't meet until you are prepared to use people's time effectively
- How you conduct the meeting
  - Effective facilitation – assuring inclusiveness and full participation**
- Committee work between meetings
- Motivating people to participate and creating buy-in

## ***Preparing the Meeting Agenda***

- Sequencing of agenda items
  - A meeting is like a team event
  - Coaches don't start team with most difficult play
  - A group needs to gel
  - Early in meeting – items needing mental energy, creativity, clear thinking, items that will unify
  - Don't put difficult items back-to-back
  - Sufficient, but not too much time for each item
  - End meeting with items that will unify
  - Get the agenda out early
- Timed agendas

## ***Face-to-Face Meetings***

- Room setup and seating is *critical to successful discussions*
  - Hollow Square – not a long table
  - 1/3 of participants seated at each leg of U
  - Only Chair and Staff Liaison at top
    - Eye contact is key
- Food, beverages, tent cards with names, handouts
  - Creature comforts – all are important
- Arrive early
  - Check setup and CHANGE IF NECESSARY
  - Be available to committee members before meeting
  - Review agenda with staff – any last minute issues?

## ***Good Discussion Flow***

- Start broad and narrow down
- Don't need to follow Robert's Rules or Order (unless required)
  - Principles: Open participation; Rights of minority viewpoint
- Formal motion immediately narrows issue

## ***Good Approach for Most Agenda Items***

Opening Statement

Reason for discussion - Objective - Time Commitment

Problems to be discussed

Brainstorming needed?

Generate alternative solutions

Decide among alternatives

Develop plan to solve problem

Assign tasks to carry out plan

When meeting is over, nail down

Decisions made

Point people for each decision

Approximate time frame

## ***Chairing a meeting effectively***

- Facilitate, don't "hold court"
  - Diversity of input is essential
- Guide, mediate, probe, draw people in, stimulate discussions
- Prevent one-sided discussions
  - Let others thrash out ideas
- Deal with people who are disrupting the meeting or causing distractions
- Keep discussions on track – Periodically summarize and refocus
- Monitor participation
  - Control talkative people and draw out silent people
- Work your way up the seniority ladder
- Meetings shouldn't just validate the thinking chair, staff or 1-2 dominant people
- Use well placed questions to seek information, clarify, summarize
- Be sensitive to people's feelings
  - Watch for visual and verbal clues
- Move group to a decision: Seek consensus
  - Unanimity is not required
- Close meeting by
  - Noting accomplishments
  - Confirming assignments and due dates
  - Confirming understanding of next steps
  - Declaring victory (even if there isn't any)
  - Focusing on the positive, not the negative
  - Reinforcing importance of participation
  - *SAYING THANKS*

## ***Tips to the Chair***

- Open meeting on time
- Announce business to be conducted
- Recognize members entitled to talk
  - Discourage breaking in
- Re-state issue to be voted on before finalizing action
- Put question to a fair vote
  - Explain consequences
- Announce result of action and follow-through to be taken
- Assist in expediting business
- Stay with the agenda
- Close the meeting on time, or get permission to extend

## ***Conducting Conference Calls***

- Use 800 “call in” phone number, rather than having operator call offices
- Ask participants to press “mute” button – Take care with ambient noise
- Keep agenda limited
- Put out detailed agenda in advance of the call
- Include a roster of call participants
- Limit call to no more than one hour
  - More frequent calls of shorter duration are more effective than long calls
- Start on time; End on time
- Announce procedures for conducting call
  - People must identify themselves before speaking
    - Allows chair to queue up speakers
  - No break-ins; say your name if you want to talk
  - Keep comments brief; hard for people to track without visual cues
  - Keep control, but don’t dominate
- Facilitate discussion; draw people into the discussion
- Be very clear on every action taken
- Roll call on votes (affirms commitment)
- End on time; get minutes out promptly

## ***Committee Focus for the Year***

Effective committees are those that focus on achieving a limited number of outcomes directly linked to and supportive of achieving the Association's strategic plan. To assist in assuring that the Committee remains focused, it is imperative that the Committee Chair and Staff Liaison agree on the key outcomes which the Committee is pursuing through its work, and this form is intended to assist in this process.

**Committee** \_\_\_\_\_

Committee chair \_\_\_\_\_

Vice Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Staff liaison \_\_\_\_\_

Board liaison \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives in the Strategic Plan that this committee's work is tied to**

**Key outcomes focusing the Committee's work this year**

1.

2.

3.

4.

Other committees in the Association which are working in areas closely aligned with the work of this committee, and thus require coordination of work:

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