

10. Silence gives consent (to go along) following any decision.

Key points to keep in mind when using this method:

For action items, you need a motion before discussion

Calling question asks 2/3 consent that debate be ended. It does not itself end discussion.

System is predicated on some knowledge of the rules. This is easy to develop.

Formal minutes are usually prepared following the meeting.

It is not unethical to arrange for awkward motions in advance so long as the rights of participants are protected. Particularly helpful for elections/appointments.

"Is there objection to..." is a good expedient if not misused. It can save time.

Disadvantages of the Parliamentary Method: To much emphasis on the Chair who: controls process, deals with conflict, is often the most active participant, is the chief decision maker, is often most influential participant, may be too involved in the outcome;

Low participation; Conflict between process and power (since both vested in the Chair)

Out of these problems was born **The Interaction Method**. This is extremely effective with SOME kinds of meetings. Main Benefits:

Separates process role into neutral facilitator

Retains power and leadership role of the chair

Restructures information handling function into neutral recorder

Uses large sheets of papers as a "group memory," posting them on wall to focus group energy and serve as a common record.

It is based on concepts of roles and contracts, facilitative behaviors, and everything being negotiated. The Chair is freed from having to be

impartial and can argue for his/her own ideas. Result can be better, more productive use of chair's knowledge and influence. For an excellent discussion of this method, see "How to Make Meeting Work," by Doyle & Strauss (a Jove Books paperback).

Evaluations: One should follow every meeting. Can be formal or informal, written or oral. Meeting evaluators can be appointed, with their report as an agenda item. Be sure and check "natural barometers" such as body language. During longer meetings, a mid-course evaluation or "fishbowl" can help.

Follow-up. Group memory, brief of actions, or minutes are distributed promptly. A separate "to do" list can also be helpful.

ORGANIZER'S LIBRARY (\$5 each)

- Volunteer Leadership
- Conservation Action
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- Political Action
- Training for Effectiveness

Order from:

Sierra Club, Office of Volunteer Development
730 Polk St.
San Francisco, CA 94109

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Meetings

...how to make them more effective and productive...

MEETINGS

- What IS a meeting?
- Common problems with meetings
- Advance preparation
- Physical factors
- Beginning the meeting
- Process:
 - Parliamentary
 - Interaction method
- Evaluations
- Follow-up

Meetings:

How To Make Them More Effective...and Productive!

Definition of a Meeting: Any time 3 or more people work together, face to face, to:

Present Information, Report/Give Feedback, Plan, Solve Problems, Make Decisions

In the Sierra Club, we have a LOT of meetings. But consider that there are over 11 million meetings a day in the U.S. alone, and that organizations spend: 7-15% of their personnel budgets, 35% of middle management's time and 60% of top management's time in MEETINGS!

And meetings are where a large part of the Sierra Club's work gets done. So it's important that our meetings be effective and productive.

Common Problems With Meetings:

Process, Roles, Information Handling, Decision Making, Environment, Preparation, Follow-up.

Many meeting problems stem from lack of awareness of what tasks groups do/do not perform effectively.

Groups are good for: Generating lots of ideas, Exchanging points of view, Surfacing problems, Discussing issues, Making final decisions. GENERATING information

Groups are NOT good for: Organizing large amounts of data, Synthesizing lots of ideas, Researching information, Testing alternatives, Writing reports (or anything else!), Editing. ORGANIZING information

Advance Preparation: Ask first: What is the purpose of the meeting? (remembering that the Conservation Committee is run differently from the Executive Committee). Possible answers: Training & Education, Information Giving, Information Seeking, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Team Development

Given the purpose, decide what should be the format. Then ask: Who should attend? Perhaps more importantly: Who should NOT attend?

Brief participants beforehand if they don't know purpose, format, or ground rules.

Develop a preliminary agenda. (It does NOT have to be developed by the Chair. Here's a good opportunity to involve others, the vice chair, perhaps.) NOTE: Until adopted, an agenda is always "proposed," tentative," or "preliminary." The agenda should be distributed enough in advance to allow input or feedback from others.

The agenda should contain: Who, what, when, where, why, how, map, directions, etc. Proposed items (name, person responsible, time estimate, type action requested) Note the number of times that participants' names appear on the agenda as a possible indicator of disproportionate participation. ANY needed background information or advance reading should be distributed with the agenda. (Reading is a lousy use of meeting time.)

Physical Factors: If there's any doubt about the setting, come early YOURSELF and set up the room.

Outdoors can be difficult: Uncomfortable seating, lack of a table for writing, sun in eyes, temperature, etc. (This seems to fly in the face of the Sierra Club mindset!)

Do you need a table? It's conducive to a professional and businesslike atmosphere. Good, IF that's what you need for this particular meeting (but not always).

Consider the psychology of a home vs. boardroom, office, rented room, etc. Each has advantages/disadvantages. Match the setting with the purpose and desired outcome(s).

Seating: Auditorium style good for information giving. "U" good for information seeking and allows maximum leader-participant interaction. Circle is good for problem solving/decision making.

Face meeting away from windows and doors, if possible, as well as other distractions such as restrooms, telephones, kitchen or coffee pot. Light should be good, chairs comfortable.

Beginning the Meeting: START ON TIME, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE! To start late penalizes

those who came on time for the sake of those who didn't. Set and enforce limits on discussion time, breaks, adjournment, etc.

Agenda Adoption is an item of MAJOR importance. It is the members' mutual contract of how their time will be spent. This contract may be amended later, if necessary. Be realistic. Is completing 9 out of 15 or 9 out of 6 items a more successful meeting?

Prioritize the items. Don't put off important items until late when participants are tired. EVERYTHING is negotiated: Time Limits, Process, Breaks, Adjournment, Extensions

Post the agenda, if possible. Scratch off completed items DECISIVELY!

Process: 2 Approaches: Parliamentary Method (traditional), Interaction Method (modern) Each has its benefits and shortcomings.

If by-laws are followed, most Sierra Club meetings are required to go by Roberts Rules of Order. (If you don't like this method, be forthright enough to change the by-laws!) Many meetings are better conducted by interaction or some other method.

Principles of Parliamentary Law (traditional)

1. The organization is paramount. The power of a meeting is in its members.
2. All members are equal.
3. A minimum number is required to do business.
4. Only one issue at a time. Only one speaker at a time.
5. Full debate before any action is taken.
6. Issues are considered, NEVER people or personalities.
7. A settled question is not brought up again.
8. The majority decides except when the rights of participants are involved.
9. When rights of participants are involved, 2/3 decides.

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