Planning and Conducting an Effective Meeting

The Top Ten Reminders for Running an Effective Meeting

1. First decide if you need to have a meeting.
   - Often times there are more efficient ways to “meet” objectives without holding a meeting.
   - Ask yourself:
     - Why am I scheduling this meeting?
     - What do I want to accomplish or gain?
     - What information will be exchanged or decisions made?

If you have determined a meeting is the best way to meet your objectives, then you should organize an effective meeting.

2. Have an agenda which is circulated prior to the meeting and then stick to it!

   Every meeting should have a specific purpose, an objective. This purpose should be reflected in the agenda. If you are being called to a meeting, ask for an agenda. A printed agenda ensures everyone will be on the same page. Regional Commissioners: You may need to consult with other board members to finalize the agenda.
   - Prepare yourself – prioritize issues to be discussed, issues from previous meetings.
   - Research information necessary for making important decisions

3. Arrange all logistics. Have everything ready for the meeting.
   - Find a comfortable and convenient meeting place.
   - Variety – meet in different places (not every time) to keep their attention and accommodate different members
   - Arrange in advance for A-V equipment, flip charts, markers and other supplies
   - Arrive early and set up.
   - Check lighting, heat, ventilation, etc.
   - Set up seating arrangements. Chairs in a circle, semi circle or U shape allow for easy sight of all members and all will feel included.
   - Provide name tags if new people will be attending
   - Greet people as they arrive – you are the host.
   - Supply refreshments if appropriate.

4. Send out announcements, invitations and reminders for the meeting
   - Invite guest speakers to present on special topics/issues
   - Send general and personal invitations early, send reminders
   - Circulate agenda, minutes and background information in advance

5. If networking first, give three minutes notice of starting time.

   Many meetings have a pre-meeting period of mixing, networking, getting coffee, or other unstructured activities. The transition to structured meeting necessarily takes a few minutes for people to finish their conversations and take their seats.

6. Start on time.

   If you wait for late arrivals, regulars will start to expect that you will wait, and over time the meeting will start later and later.
   - Set a welcoming tone: introductions (ice breaker)
   - Engage all participants during meeting. Everyone should have something to contribute. If not, let uninvolved participants know why it was important for them to be at the meeting.
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7. Keep track of time, or appoint a timer and make sure he/she does the job effectively.
   - Acknowledge interruptions, know that whether they are dealt with now or after current business is your decision, and stand firm on it.
   - Be gentle but firm with people who speak too long or get off the subject. A simple “let’s move on” or “thanks, now let’s hear from someone else.
   - Do not tolerate side-talking. It is the job of the person presiding over the meeting – not necessarily the person speaking at the time – to stop this. An appropriate comment is “One meeting at a time, please.” Another response can be for the speaker to stop speaking and simply look at the offenders while waiting for the side-talking to end.

8. Be a good facilitator
   - Be interested and enthusiastic – enthusiasm can be contagious. Have a positive attitude!
   - Set ground rules for the meeting, including the expectation that everyone participate, no judgment statements during discussions and that there will be an ending time and state that time.
   - You will not have time to take minutes, so be sure to appoint another volunteer to do this job.
   - Ask open-ended questions. Example: “How can we promote this fund raiser to our volunteers?” Vs. “Do you think the volunteers will accept this fund raiser?” – which dead ends with a “yes” or “no” response. Ask “How?” questions, not “Why?”
   - Listen carefully to each person. Make sure you understand what the speaker is saying. If you’re unsure, try restating it or ask the person to clarify. Be aware of people who are confused or lost.
   - Call attendees by name. This personalizes the discussion and also assists the minute taker in accurately noting who is speaking.
   - Avoid stating that a person is wrong; rather ask for other comments and ideas on the subject. Always throw it back to the audience.

9. Have an ending procedure.
   - End with a list of next action items.
   - It helps if as many people as possible have assigned tasks for the next meeting.
   - Summarize key points.
   - Look for emerging threats.
   - Express any ending concerns as wishes/problems to be solved. E.g., “I wish we could find a way to… how could we…?”
   - Ask for feedback. “How could we make the next meeting better?” End the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things that felt good or successful.
   - Before adjourning, state the next meeting date, time and place. Thank everyone.

10. After the meeting
    - Either you or the assigned person should write up and distribute minutes by the next day. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting and reduces errors of memory.
    - Follow up on delegated tasks. See that members understand and fulfill their responsibilities.
    - Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
    - Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
    - Conduct periodic evaluation of the meetings, either secretly or publicly.
    - Express appreciation for people’s time, energy and contribution if you want continued involvement. Set a tone of respect for each other.
American Youth Soccer Organization
Regional Board Meeting Agenda
Region 0000

Date: __________ Location: _______________________

Start Time: ______ Stop Time: ______

Persons In Attendance:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Review of Last Meeting’s Minutes
Changes and Corrections:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Action Items and Person Responsible:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Informational Items:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Discussion Items:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Meeting Notes:
American Youth Soccer Organization
Regional Board Meeting Agenda

Section_____________ Area_____________

Date:_____________
Start time:___________ Stop time:___________
Location:___________

Circle attendees:

Regional Commissioner  Coach Administrator
Referee Administrator   Registrar
Safety Director         Treasurer
CVPA                   Uniform Coordinator

Other attendees:
Action Items:
1. _________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________
6. _________________________________________________________

Informational Items:
1. _________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________
6. _________________________________________________________

Discussion Items:
1. _________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________
SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A REGIONAL BOARD MEETING

American Youth Soccer Organization
Region 0000 Board Meeting Agenda

Date: Aug. 7, 2005   Location: AYSO Meeting Room   Start Time: 6:30 pm   Stop Time: 8:30 pm

Opening Statement Regional Commissioner 5 min

Review of Last Meeting’s Minutes Regional Secretary 5 min

Old Business
Review of all action items since last meeting Regional Commissioner 15 min

Review of Season’s Calendar Regional Secretary 5 min

Treasurer’s Report & Budget Discussion Regional Treasurer 10 min
Reimbursement checks will be issued for training, clinics and travel expenses – Bring in reimbursement forms

Referee Report Regional Referee Administrator 20 min
Decision about what type of incentive program for the upcoming season
Issue: Not enough referees volunteered to cover games

Section Meeting Announcement Regional Commissioner 5 min
Are you planning to attend?

Coach Report Regional Coach Administrator 5 min
Report on practice schedule
Items for the coaches’ packet

Field and Equipment Field Coordinator 10 min
Schedule field clean up day
Report on Equipment – Discussion on purchasing new equipment

Uniform Report Uniform Coordinator 10 min

Registration Report Regional Registrar 15 min
Registration Totals – Discussion about refunds and a waiting list
Rosters

Closing Remarks & Action Item Review Regional Commissioner 5 min
These days, many of us find ourselves in the position of taking minutes without a clue of how to go about it. The following is a guide for making the task easier:

- List type of meeting, name of organization, date and time, venue, main topics, and time of adjournment.
- Prepare an outline based on the agenda ahead of time, and leave plenty of white space for notes. By having the topics already written down, you can jump right on to a new topic without pause.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room. Or, you can pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts.
- To be sure about who said what, make a map of the seating arrangement, and make sure to ask for introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Don’t make the mistake of recording every single comment. Concentrate on getting the gist of the discussion and taking enough notes to summarize it later. Think in terms of issues discussed, major points raised and decisions taken.
- Use whatever recording method is comfortable for you, a notepad, a laptop, computer, a tape recorder, a steno pad or shorthand.
- If you’re an active participant in the meeting, be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and have your questions ready ahead of time. If you have to concentrate on grasping the issues while you are taking your notes, they won’t make any sense to you later.
- Don’t wait too long to type up the minutes, especially while your memory is fresh. Be sure to have the minutes approved by the regional commissioner or appropriate person, before distributing them to the attendees.
- Don’t be intimidated by the prospect of taking minutes. Concise and coherent minutes are the mark of a professional. The very process of recording minutes can give you a deeper understanding of the issues faced by AYSO along with the ability to focus on what’s important.