Leading Effective Meetings

Problem: When meetings lack structure and a concise agenda, they can often be ineffective and unproductive. These types of meetings often run over a specified time frame, lack control, fail to move forward with their goals and participants may become frustrated and disenfranchised.

Possible Solutions: Having an organized facilitator is crucial to having a productive meeting. A facilitator should ask questions, listen, paraphrase comments, be inclusive in discussion, keep track of the agenda, and synthesize resolutions to move toward a goal. The following steps may lead to more productive meetings:

1. Plan Ahead
   - Set goals and objectives that are attainable
   - Prepare an agenda to keep participants on task
   - Prepare materials for the meeting before participants arrive

2. Running a Successful Meeting
   - Keep to your agenda - consider adding times for each of the agenda items to keep the meeting moving forward
   - Keep discussion focused - remind participants of time, involve all members in the discussion, control domineering personalities, summarize what people are saying, bring closure to discussions
   - Use the 5Cs of Communication - clarity, completeness, conciseness, concreteness and correctness

3. Commit to ACTION
   - Have a plan of action - end the meeting with a summary of action items
   - Define tasks and person responsible
   - Establish deadlines

Other things to remember:
   - Be respectful of each member’s opinions and ideas, confine discussion to the topic at hand, include all members, and keep an open mind
   - Encourage members to be punctual, avoid backtracking for tardy members
   - Discourage cell phone use in meetings, encourage members to turn off phones or set them to vibrate during meetings to reduce distraction
   - Readdress ground rules for having effective meetings on an as-needed basis

Facilitating effective meetings allows the group to move forward with goals and projects, leads to a more efficient use of time, as well as improves member morale.