

Keep meetings timely and on time

You're at a meeting that seems to go on, and on, and on. You think to yourself, "My gosh! Get this meeting under control..." or, "that's not even on the agenda!"

How do you make YOUR meetings run so that people want to attend? How can you be sure that your meeting isn't on everyone's Top 10 list of things we have to do but wish we didn't??? Try the following:



1. Use an agenda

An agenda is a list of topics or business to be discussed. Some is routine business, some new and some unfinished. You need an agenda to keep everyone on topic. The California State PTA Toolkit is a good resource for an actual agenda and what one might look like. This is a KEY tool for running a meeting.

2. Time your agenda

Yes, this means putting actual time limits (or estimates) throughout your agenda. And right on the agenda! Five minutes is good for opening (call to order, pledge of allegiance, inspiration...), 10-15 minutes for financial business, 20 minutes for committee reports. Make sure your time listed for each item adds up to the start and end time. Example:

*Sunshine Elementary PTA
October 2, 2009
School Library
7 – 8:25 p.m.*

"7 to 8:25 p.m." means 85 minutes total time is expected to be needed to conduct the business of the organization. When people see the meeting has these kinds of controls, they feel better about attending. People's time is valuable; let them know you value their time.

3. Consent calendar

What is a consent calendar? It is a portion at the beginning of the agenda where routine business is placed as "items as a group" for approval. This could include meeting minutes, treasurer's report of balance, the agenda itself, etc. Minutes and other reports placed on the consent calendar must be sent out *before* the meeting for review. No lengthy discussion is expected. Corrections are fine. The items placed on the consent calendar are then called for approval as a "group" of items, not individual items, thus saving the group time. The consent calendar is not to be used as a venue for blanket approval. Items can be removed by the body or an individual and discussed separately. In fact, they should be called up individually and any questions answered.

When the agenda is placed on the consent calendar and approved, variations and off-track comments or discussion can be more easily controlled. "That's not on our agenda," works wonders!

4. Time

Start your meeting on time, no matter what. People get used to meetings that start late, they even expect it and then they adjust *their* arrival for the lateness. Clearly state the meeting's start and end times right on the agenda, in the heading by the date and location. (See above.) Then people attending know there is a set beginning and a set adjournment.

These may seem like little things BUT THEY WORK!