

MEETING PROCEDURE

5/18/95

1. RULE NUMBER 1 - The Chairman Must not Desert His Post.

The chairman of a meeting must always remain in the "chairman's chair"; that is, he must preside. He cannot, and must not "join" the group as an ordinary participant. He cannot start expressing his opinion and trying to work a personal agenda, no matter how "right" he thinks his agenda is. Instead, he must:

a. LISTEN....

So that he is clear on what is being discussed, and what is happening in the meeting.

b. REFLECT.... (like a mirror)

The options back to the group, so that they will have help in knowing what actions would be appropriate.

c. COMMUNICATE ...

That is, seeing to it that the group knows what is being said. Generally a group does not keep up with what is being said. The minute the communication link is broken, it is the duty of the chairman to intervene and clarify.

d. FACILITATE...

By summarizing occasionally what is happening in the group. Also, it is his task to keep things flowing. When the group enters a "detour", he should immediately intervene kindly but firmly and put things "back on track."

If the chairman does not do the things listed above, it is likely no one else will take the responsibility for them; hence, the meeting (like a body) **WILL HAVE NO HEAD!**

This will be obvious when it happens. The meeting will go into confusion, and will last longer than necessary. The chairman cannot "desert his post." If he leaves it, it remains vacant, because no one can take it without usurping the role.

The way the chairman "deserts" his post is that he begins to make statements and express his opinion about what should be done; that is, he becomes an advocate of a certain position. There is nothing wrong with expressing an opinion, but the moment he starts this, he ceases to be an impartial guide for the group.

One way to handle this problem is to learn how to ask questions in order to make a point. If the group is not considering the cost of a project, he should not say, "The cost is prohibitive". Instead he should ask, "How much will this cost? Can we afford it? etc. By asking those questions he will make the same point he would have made in statements.

If chairman finds himself in the middle of doing what he should not do; that is, expressing his personal opinion for action, there is an "escape hatch" he can take. If he drops in a statement, he should "escape" with a question. EXAMPLE:

1. "This course of action is going to cost more than \$10,000." (Perhaps this is a fact the group does not know, and he feels he has to inject it into the discussion.)
2. But he can get out of the line of fire by following that statement with a question, such as:

"Can we handle an expenditure of that size?"
If they say, "Yes", then he can ask, "How would you suggest we could work it into our budget"?

3. With this maneuver, the focus shifts back to the group's processing of the information by discussion, and the leader "escapes" from his dilemma.

If the chairman decides to become a participant, there is also a mechanical way to avoid the problem. By pre-arrangement with another man, he should turn the chair over to someone else while he participates. Then when he has handled his issue as a participant, he can return and take over his chairmanship. In that way, the group always has a leader who is watching the facilitating role.