

MEETING PROCEDURE

2. RULE NUMBER 2- CLOSURE

The chairman is responsible for the tempo and acceleration of the meeting. Although it may not be his fault that the meeting is dragging, it is still his duty to “cure” the problem. So how does he do that?

The name of the principle is “closure”. The tempo of a meeting depends on how well discussions are “wrapped up”, put on the shelf, and a new subject is introduced. Groups tend to talk in circles. Sometimes this happens even after consensus has been reached. At such times, it is the role of the chairman to detect when the meeting has arrived at consensus and to announce it to the whole. Here are two examples of how this can be done:

- a. I think we may have consensus here. Let me summarize what we seem to be saying...Can we agree on that? Any objections? None? Good. The chair will entertain a motion to that effect, if someone cares to make it... Mr. Secretary, would you record that in the minutes...NOW OUR NEXT ITEM OF BUSINESS IS....
- b. We started out with some disagreement on this subject, but I now sense we may have come to a “VIOLENT AGREEMENT”; that is, we essentially agree but are still talking! We seem to be ready to:
 - a. One, to have an Elders’ retreat.
 - b. Two, to have it in the fall.
 - c. Three, to design the retreat to study procedure for making good decisions together as a group.

Now, if that meets with your approval, I’ll appoint a retreat task force to bring us back a specific proposal of dates, times, and places in two weeks. Any objection? Fine, Mr. secretary, enter that decision in the minutes...OUR NEXT ITEM IS

This procedure rule should not be read as a gimmick or a trick. When the chairman does a “trial close” on the topic, he may have to spend some more time on it if there is objection. He is not trying to thwart the desire of the group, but trying to facilitate decision making. He is working as a “SERVANT LEADER” and articulating what the group has already done. Although everyone may want to “move on”, they may be unable to get it said. It will be accepted from the chairman because that is the role he is supposed to play for the group.