

Tools for More Effective Nonprofit Board Meetings

Structuring Your Meetings to Achieve Results

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Agenda

Goal, to help you:

1. Create more efficient and effective board meetings.
2. Gain greater commitment to decisions.
3. Achieve broader engagement and follow-up.

Provide selected **tools** for implementing structural improvements to your meetings to accomplish these goals:

- Participation in effective discussion: 1-2-All
- Focused agendas: STARS
- Seating structures
- Balanced feedback: Three Reaction Questions
- Keeping discussion on track: Four Responsibilities
- Managing decisions: Five Cs

As time allows, work with some of your cases and take your questions ...

Introductions

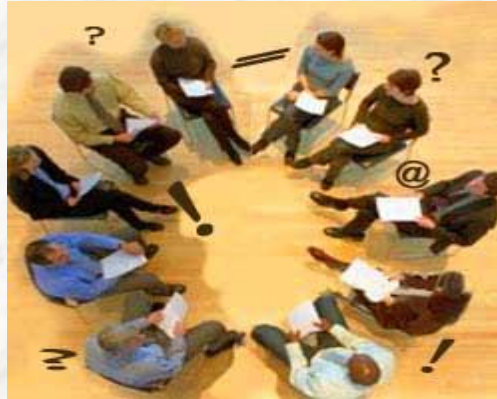


1. Take a moment to reflect:
What are 1-2 of the biggest challenges to effective board meetings in your experience?
1. Turn to the person beside you, introduce yourself and share those challenges. Do you hold any in common?

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In a few minutes, we will resume as a whole group to learn what you shared

Some of My Challenges



- Size
- Time
- Stuck in details
- Unequal participation
- Muddled decisions

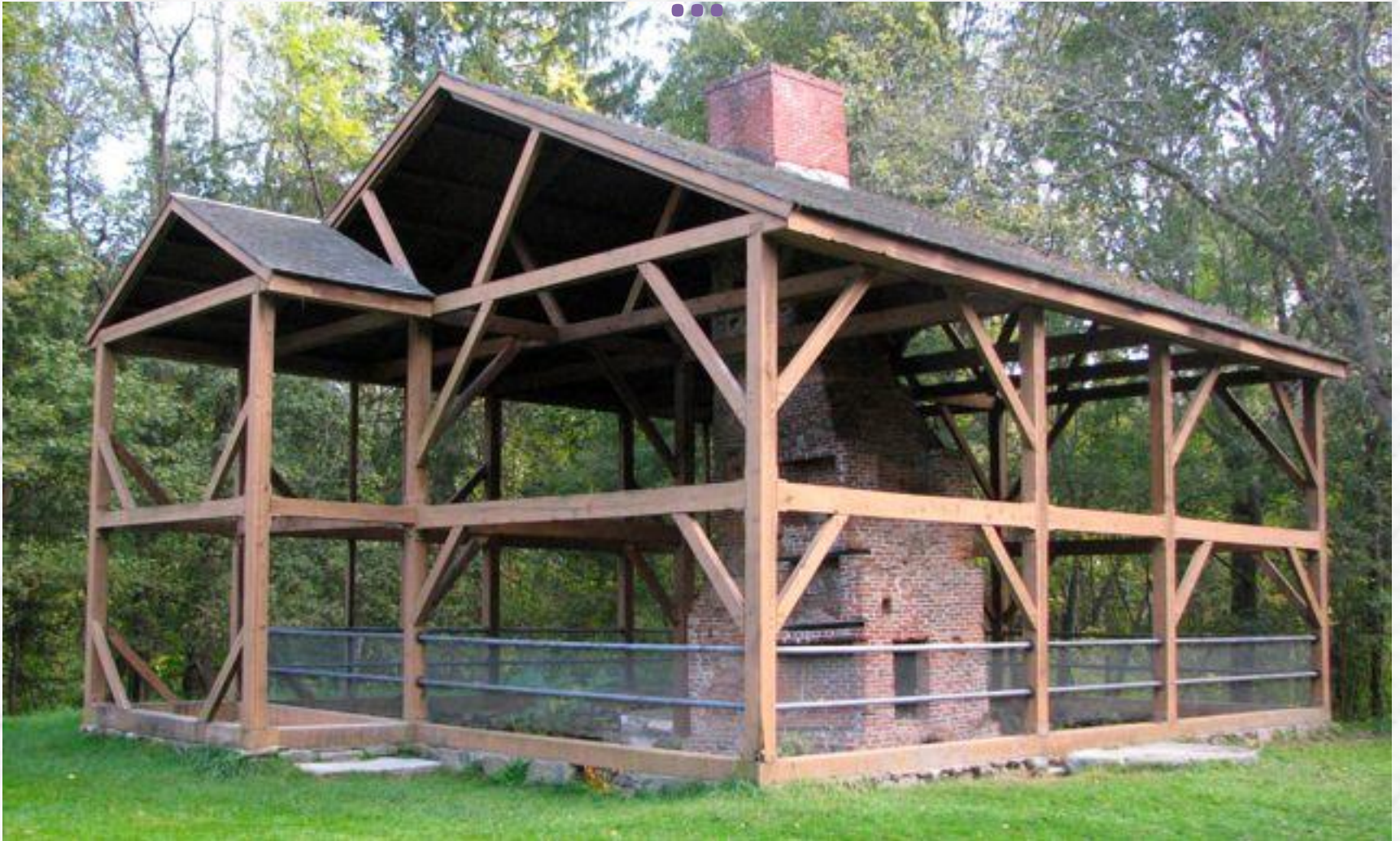




Which meeting
would you rather
attend?



Unseen Structures Affect What We Do



Unseen Structures of Meetings



- Physical, temporal, procedural aspects of meetings.
- With an (unrecognized) impact on how we interact with each other and the work of the meeting.

Structural Choices in Planning

Choice 1: How you *define* the task or work of the meeting.

Choice 2: *Who* you invite.

Choice 3: How you design the *discussion*.

Choice 4: How you plan to reach a *decision*.

Choice 5: How *time* will be spent.

Choice 6: How you will arrange the meeting *space*.

Leading to an Agenda

Structural Choices in Conducting

Choice 1: How you *share* responsibility.

Choice 2: How you support *dialogue*.

Choice 3: How you manage *time*.

Choice 4: How you work with any *conflict*.



Structural Choices in Achieving Results



Choice 1: How you *build decisions* with your group.

Choice 2: How you plan to *follow-up*.

Structural Choice: How you Design the Discussion

- **Principle of 8:** Managing Group Size for Effective Participation
- **1-2-All:** Effective Engagement for Groups of Any Size

Typical(?) But Challenging Board Meeting

- 18 members
- Monthly meetings of uncertain length
- Change in leadership
- Difficult, ineffective board discussions
- Lots of unstated issues





My Recommendations

- Create an agenda that clearly defined the work to be done.
- Change room set-up and seating
- Plan a structure for discussions so all can be heard and meetings stay on time

Tools for A Better Structure

- STARS Agenda
- Seating Structures
- 1-2-All
- Three Reaction Questions



STARS Agenda



- **Specific:** Each point defined by intended outcome
- **Timed:** Realistic timing for discussion and items sequenced so most important items get the time they deserve
- **Actionable:** By those present
- **Relevant:** To all present
- **Shared:** In advance

Typical Agenda (7-9PM)

Introductions	5 minutes
Approval of December	2 minutes
Review of Agenda	5 minutes
• Identification of Minutes Taker and Time Keeper.	
Use of external facilitator	10 minutes
Update on 350 Brainstorming Initiative	10 minutes
Winter and Spring Community Education Programs updates	10 minutes
Transition Town Initiative Planning	50 minutes
• Group reactions to last month's presentation	
• Planning for Implementing first two steps, including leadership of those steps	
Plan for February Meeting	5 minutes

Revised Agenda

NA	Timekeeper: <i>HE</i>	Minutes: <i>MM</i>
7-7:20	Introductions, Minutes, Agenda, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions (2 new members) • Check-in (1 minute each) • Approval of meeting minutes from last time • Review of tonight's agenda 	
7:20 – 8:20	Transition Town Initiative Decision Review summary of the proposed design of the 12 step “Transition Town Initiative” as presented last month. <u>Decision:</u> Do we want to support this Initiative? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, how should we begin? • Who will lead the initial steps? 	
8:20 – 8:35	Decision on using external facilitator Report from subcommittee who met to clarify our needs and reviewed these with facilitator. What additional expectations or questions do we have as a committee about the possible need/role of a facilitator? <u>Decision:</u> Shall we ask facilitator to come to our next meeting as a first step?	
8:35 – 8:45	Update on upcoming events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information on 350 Brainstorming Initiative • Update on Winter and Spring Community Education Programs 	
8:45 – 8:55	Wrap up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions this month • Topics for next meeting agenda • Feedback on this meeting 	

Seating Structures

Changing Interaction by Changing Seating



Decide if you want individuals to sit as they usually do. The best choice may be to mix participants so that the same people don't sit with and talk to the same folks as usual.

— **Direct people to their “assigned” seats as they arrive.**

If nothing else, you can take a different chair yourself. If you always sit at the head of the table, move to the side.

If it's a large group, create small circles of chairs.

1-2-All

Effective Engagement for Any Size Group

After introducing a subject or question to be addressed by the group, complete the following steps.

1: Individual Reflection. Make sure everyone understands the question or topic for consideration, then give individuals a minute or two to gather their own thoughts. (This is the “1” of the tool).

2: Small Group Discussion. Then ask participants to turn to their neighbors to form small, 2-3 person groups to share their ideas. Explain the time they have for their discussion and to make sure everyone in their group shares their thoughts in that time.

All: Whole Group Report. Ask each group for a brief report (typically 1-3 minutes) summarizing their small group discussion.

Three Reaction Questions

Gathering balanced feedback

- Present proposal. Then ask participants to reflect on their own or in small groups to answer these questions:
 1. **What do you like about [the proposal]?**
 2. **Where do you need further information?**
 3. **Where do you have concerns?**
- After a few minutes, take reports, *one question at a time beginning with the first*. Get all replies to first question before proceeding to the second.

Four Responsibilities

Sharing the Work of Running the Meeting

At the start of the meeting, ask for volunteers to share the following specific responsibilities:

- **Discussion leader:** Responsible for making sure each person who wants to speak is able to contribute in the time available.
- **Timekeeper:** Keeps track of the time available. Alerts the group when time planned for a discussion is running out. Asks the group what they want to do if more time is needed.
- **Recorder:** Uses flip chart or white board to visibly record the *real time* progress of the group's discussion where all can see it. This should be done in a way that uses a few words to capture each speaker's comment(s).
- **Information manager/minutes:** Responsible for maintaining the formal documentation and recorded minutes of the group's work. (Most boards have an appointed secretary who may fulfill this role.)

Make sure each volunteer understands the scope of his/her responsibility for this meeting.

Five Cs of Decision-Making

Choosing How to Decide

- Productive engagement requires being clear how you want to reach decisions on strategy.
- Five ways to reach decisions with a group, “5Cs”
 - Consensus
 - Consent
 - Compromise
 - Counting
 - Consulting

Application to Your Meetings

1. Think of some past or current meeting where you struggle to maintain effective, timely discussion. *Which of these tools would be most helpful in that situation?*
2. Turn to the person beside you, and share your example and tool choice(s)

In a few minutes, we will resume as a whole group.

For More Information..



Rick's e-book available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and other e-book retailers.

Also see Rick's blog at www.meetingforresults.com/blog or sign up for his newsletter

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