

Agenda for Success

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The agenda is simply a list of items to be addressed. The agenda serves to structure a meeting and help the board to do what it is supposed to do. Most agendas for board meetings look alike: business items, information items and action items. Necessary but not very exciting!

Those responsible for preparing the agenda for board meetings (usually Chairs with the CEO and Executive Committee) can devise ways to handle the routine matters as expeditiously as possible (send materials out in advance of the meeting, "consent agenda," etc.), thereby gaining time to include a valuable fourth item frequently given short shrift: discussion of current policy and strategy concerns.

Boards that are mission-focused and future-oriented allocate time at each board meeting to discuss key questions (the mega issues impacting the organizations), reflecting on viable alternatives and moving always toward their preferred futures.

All too frequently we find ourselves dealing with crises rather than keeping constant tabs on the trends and drivers of change that affect our ministries and developing strategies in advance to meet new challenges.

Successful board meetings require successful agendas. Our meeting agendas must focus our energy on issues that stimulate collaborative thinking and lead to strategic action.

Tips for Successful Agendas

- Treat the volunteer time of your board members as if it were sacred.
- Set up the annual agenda - the organization's carefully planned objectives for the year - that allows you to focus on one or two key topics per meeting.
- Create a flow chart or other graphic representation to show where you are with your annual agenda.
- Use your meeting agenda to focus trustees and directors on what really matters.
- Provide enough time for what needs to be done.
- Compose a checklist to ensure that matters that require only periodic review do not get overlooked.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your agenda immediately after the meeting.