

# Managing meetings

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# Well-run meetings achieve more.

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- A formal meeting protocol structures the meeting effectively and encourages constructive contribution to discussion

# Factor for an effective meeting #1:

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- **A good chair**

# **The main responsibilities of a board chair are to:**

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- **Lead strategic planning**
- **Manage relationships**
- **Ensure risks to the organization are managed**
- **Monitor leadership effectiveness**
- **Encourage all board members to contribute to debate and decision-making**
- **Manage board processes**

# The chair is expected to:

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- **Conduct efficient board meetings**
- **Set annual meeting timetables**
- **Set meeting agendas**
- **Determine board information packages**
- **Ensure board papers are distributed in advance of meetings**
- **Establish board committees and define terms of reference**
- **Attend committee meetings where appropriate**
- **Make sure the board's resources are being well and appropriately used**

# Factor for an effective meeting #2:

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## ■ **A set agenda:**

- the agenda should be planned by the board chair with the pastor and sent to board members in advance of the meeting
- If other key staff or consultants may add another dimension and knowledge to any agenda items, they should be invited in advance to attend the meeting for that item only

# Regular items:

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- Confirmation of a quorum
  - If quorum is not met the agenda can still be discussed but any decisions will only be binding when endorsed at another meeting when quorum is met
- The pastor's report
- Finance report on progress against budget and predicted cash flow
- Assessment of mission focus
- Current projects
- Future plans
- Any areas of risk

# Board information packages:

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- Papers and information that are easy to understand
- Background needed for discussions and decision-making at the meeting
- These materials need to be distributed with enough time for members to do their preparation



# Minutes recording the meeting:

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- Minutes should give an accurate record of the meeting
  - decisions made
  - financial authorizations
  - action items with timeframes and who is responsible
    - This means that members can check to see at the next meeting that what was agreed has been done
  - minutes of the previous meeting should also be confirmed by all present as an accurate record — amendments or dissensions must be recorded

# Managing board dynamics

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- The strength of boards lies in their ability to incorporate many different, sometimes strongly-held **perspectives** in making decisions

# Elements necessary for effectiveness:

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- An effective chair plus,
- a strong vision for the organization plus,
- clear board protocols, can make sure all perspectives are taken into account

# Leverage differences

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- All boards bring together a range of views and experiences
- These differences stimulate the kind of debate that leads to good decisions
- When debate is curbed or silence is taken as consent symptoms of **Group Think** can lead to poor decision making

# Dynamics of culturally diverse organizations:

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- Differences such as:
  - A preference for making decisions by consensus rather than a simple majority
  - Situations where younger members do not fully express their views out of deference to older members

# Managing differences

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- Unresolved **differences** in view can slow a board down in achieving its purpose
- The best way to manage these differences is to have a clearly set out process for reaching decisions as part of the board's processes and policies

# Ways to assess and manage ongoing differences in the boardroom are:

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- Board self-evaluation - to ensure that all members understand their roles
- Using an outside mentor or facilitator - to work through fundamental issues and establish protocols for addressing sensitive issues

# Some ways to manage conflicting views in the boardroom are:

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- Promoting an open, trusting climate
- Avoiding any one person being too directive
- Encouraging everyone to express their viewpoint, particularly when sensitive issues are tabled
- Arranging for reports to be presented to the board from outside advisors to enhance the level of understanding and to give external perspectives
- Allowing time to the strongest critics to give their views and benefit from the discussion to understand the view points of others



## If encountering tension and misunderstanding

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- it is often helpful to adjourn the meeting for a short time
- agree to postpone further discussion of the contentious item until the next board meeting

# Remember:

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- Separate the people from the issue under discussion and avoid personalities blurring the clarity of debate
- Generate options which might lead to a compromise
- Use objective criteria to make decisions
- Postpone consideration of an issue if misunderstandings arise due to lack of, or misleading information

# Remember:

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- The strength of boards lies in their ability to incorporate many different, sometimes strongly-held, **perspectives** in making decisions
- An effective chair, backed by a strong vision for the organization and clear board protocols, can make sure all perspectives are taken into account and that members reach decisions that are supported by all