

Local Meetings

Most members of a voluntary organization do not like attending meetings. The first challenge, therefore, is to reverse this attitude in your Local Organization if it exists.

Help your members understand the necessity and positive aspects of meetings. Such meetings will also provide an opportunity for fellowship and learning new skills.

If both new and experienced members look forward to the next meeting, you should be able to get good participation in other activities as well.

RESPONSIBILITIES

There are three components to good Local Organization meetings.

- **First**, there is leadership, which includes the President and the Secretary.
- **Second**, there are the physical arrangements for the meeting, usually a responsibility of the Meetings Commission.
- **Finally**, we have the participants, who include members, prospective members, guests and visitors.

We have some suggestions to offer, for each aspect.

Leadership – The President should:

1. Know the objectives of the meeting before preparing a detailed agenda, and be sure that all participants know these goals before the meeting starts.
2. Know the principles of parliamentary procedures. If your Local Organization does not have a Legal Counsel, appoint a parliamentarian.
3. Give adequate notice and details about the meeting to the membership.
4. Include an icebreaker at every meeting to establish a friendly atmosphere.
5. Keep a good standard of decorum and protocol in your meetings, but be flexible and appropriate for each occasion.
6. Limit speaking time so that the vocal few do not dominate.
7. Ensure that the Secretary keeps an accurate record of the meeting, and make his or her own notes during the meeting in case disputes arise.
8. Encourage maximum participation by those attending the meeting. The meetings are for the participants, not for the Board members.
9. Plan for variety – it is the essence of a good meeting program.
10. Have a copy of the local Constitution and the Parliamentary Procedures Manual at the head table.
11. Provide the opportunity for good internal public relations for the members and good external public relations for guests and visitors.
12. Brief members who are giving official reports.
13. Make guests and visitors feel part of the meeting.
14. Start and close the meeting on time.

Physical arrangements – the Secretary should:

1. Be responsible for setting up the meeting room, have it cleaned after the meeting and manage all the physical arrangements.
2. Ensure the correct room setup, hang up the JCI Creed, the national and JCI flags and set up audiovisual equipment and other relevant items.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The agenda can be as varied as the President wishes.
2. Select the types of meetings that best suit your membership. Take into account their occupations, working hours, interests and ambitions. Some types of meetings include luncheon meetings (brief), breakfast meetings (brief), dinner meetings (full length), etc. Ask members for suggestions.
3. Parliamentary procedures and protocol should be incorporated into the meetings to allow for maximum participation and free expression. If you observe these rules, you will have orderly meetings, all will have the opportunity to be heard, decisions will be made democratically by the majority, and the rights of the minority will be safeguarded.
4. The President should start the meeting on time and make the appropriate introductions in order of importance. Keep to the agenda and his or her personal time schedule and include short breaks in the agenda. Ensure that discussions are relevant and apply meeting procedures are appropriate to the meeting. Avoid embarrassing moments and adjudicate disputes fairly. Refrain from dominating the meeting, remain impartial, and never ask those attending the meeting for advice on meeting procedures because the President should know the procedures.

5. Finally, make sure the participants understand what the meeting should accomplish. Some of the objectives include: conducting Local Organization business, listening to a distinguished guest speaker, entertaining visiting members or other guests, holding a training session for the members and receiving a series of reports about the Local Organization program. If members understand the objectives of the meeting, they will be more sympathetic toward the leadership if some difficulties are encountered.

One important point regarding eating and drinking by members during a meeting: if a meal is part of the meeting, allow time for tables to be cleared of most items before proceeding. It is not possible for members to take full part in the meeting if their neighbors are still eating or drinking. Be aware of members' habits, too. If they detract from the meeting decorum or distract participants, change the habits.

SUMMARY

Few activities are more challenging or stimulating than a well-conducted meeting. Whether it be a business session, activity meeting or a social session, members should leave that meeting thoroughly satisfied and looking forward to the next one. Everything that is accomplished in the Local Organization is planned around a good Local Organization meeting; it is imperative to conduct a successful one.