

4 Steps for Effective Board Meetings By Jon Rydarowski

Soccer administrators across the country will be overjoyed to learn that board meetings don't need to be drawn out, pointless affairs. Soccer organizations are realizing that four simple steps can dramatically improve the effectiveness of their board meetings.

Step 1: Preparation

When it comes to board meetings, nothing is more important than preparation. A board that meets on a whim, with no specific issues to discuss is a board that does nothing for its organization. Be prepared!

Create a meeting packet. A meeting packet is a comprehensive guide to past meetings, current problems and future solutions. The packet should include:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting notes from the previous meeting
- Brief summary report from the chair of the meeting
- Financial Statements
- Bids and Proposals for the upcoming meeting

Use your bulk e-mail tool to distribute this meeting packet no less than 48 hours prior to the meeting to ensure adequate review by your board members. The board will have time to refresh themselves on the subject matter and be prepared to discuss club issues intelligently.

Step 2: Leadership

If there is one area where club board meetings tend to fall short, it is leadership. While chairing a meeting does not mean you have to be a tyrannical overlord, it does mean you have to control the flow of the meeting while keeping members on the agenda. It is the chair's responsibility to direct discussion. Take Control!

- Rely on the agenda to guide the meeting
- Develop a consistent flow from subject to subject and set time limits
- At the end of each meeting allow time for discussion of new and relevant issues and ideas
- Board meetings are for board members only, allow guests sparingly and only out of necessity. If you picked a competent board they should be able to offer the necessary representation to guide the club's direction.

A structured meeting of board members who are prepared to discuss relevant subjects will make headway in leading the club toward solutions and ideas for improvement.

Step 3: Follow Through

Follow-through is the key to an effective board. The work doesn't end when the whistle blows and board members scurry home for the night. Now it is time to put your plans in action. Get Started!

Use the spotlight approach to keep board meetings proactive:

- After the meeting, make sure that meeting notes are written and distributed along with tasks for follow up - another great use for your bulk e-mail tool.
- Release a public version of your meeting notes through your e-newsletter, discussing board decisions and upcoming plans.

- Spread the love. Give recognition to administrators, volunteers and board members who work hard for the club.
- Use your Web site as an information source to brief club members of the board's efforts to improve. All the more reason to have a dynamic club Web site designed with point and click technology allowing for simple and easy alteration.

Step 4: Make a Decision

If steps 1 through 3 are the keys to an effective board meeting then step 4 is the key to an effective club. When the board has taken the time out of their volunteer schedules to come together and deliberate on a subject then a decision needs to be made to keep the club moving forward. Embrace progress and change your club for the better!

Ultimately, a board that makes a conscious effort to take advantage of its monthly meetings has a club that will improve. Make sure your administration is prepared for the meeting beforehand, maintain relevant discussion during the meeting, and stay proactive toward club goals and tasks after. In the end, it is an effective board that will allow the club to grow and prosper.

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