

Church Administration Matters

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BOARD MEETING AGENDAS

The Pastor must guide the Board meeting in an orderly manner and maintain an efficient schedule. The chair does not dominate the meeting but simply leads the Board through the items of business in a spirit that will bring honor to God's kingdom. We must remember that even though we do all we can to be organized and operate within proper guidelines, we are serving the Lord and His work.

In **I Timothy 3: 15 (NKJV)** we read, "I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The meeting that conducts the business of the church is a spiritual meeting just as much as a Bible study or Sunday service. The focus may be somewhat different, but the conduct of church business is essential to the health and proper functioning of the local church.

John Maxwell states: "Two common problems in board meetings are: (1) each person has his own agenda, and (2) the pastor has a difficult time maintaining control of the meeting." If a Board meeting is going to be effective and honor the time of the Board Members, it is critical to avoid digressions by sticking to an agenda prepared before the meeting.

There is more than one way to establish an agenda. A traditional approach would create an agenda with the following categories:

- I. Call meeting to order / prayer
- II. Minutes of previous meetings
- III. Treasurer's Report
- IV. Unfinished Business
- V. New Business
- VI. Portfolio Reports (only applicable if Board Members have assigned portfolios)
- VII. Adjournment

An approach recommended by John Maxwell would be to group items into three categories into an agenda that might look something like this:

- I. Call meeting to order / prayer
- II. Minutes of previous meetings
- III. Information Items
- IV. Study Items
- V. Action Items
- VI. Adjournment

Information Items:

To start off on a positive note, give a number of positive reports on the ministry of the church in this section. (EG: number of people saved in the last week; an exciting Baptism Service; etc.) This would be a place to give news of upcoming events, meetings, or special services. Use this time to inform and to remind the Board of the reason for the meeting – to conduct business for the Lord.

Information items should be chosen specifically because they are positive, exciting, and set the tone for the rest of the meeting. Spend no more than 5 minutes in this area; just enough time to inspire hearts and prepare them for the most productive segment of the meeting.

Study Items:

This part of the agenda always contains the most items. Ninety-five percent of meeting time should be spent studying or discussing these issues and items of interest. Your goal during this part of the meeting is to brainstorm ideas. Work to get **every** possible suggestion – and objection – on the table. [One idea is to not allow any negatives on an idea until all the positives have been shared. This allows every idea the best chance of being adopted, though my experience this does not mean that every idea will be adopted.]

Never vote on any item that you have listed as a study item. The pressure of a vote causes people to take sides and discourages free and creative thought. Never vote on a study item before the next meeting.

You may keep some study items on the agenda for months, allowing every option and objection to be put on the table and explored. Other subjects may be study items for only one meeting and then moved on in the next session. **Keeping** items in the study section of the agenda allows people to process information without feeling threatened, to spend time in prayer on the item and eventually to reach a consensus. Only then is an item ready to be put before the Board for action.

Action Items:

The final section of the agenda contains action items, which have already been in the study section for at least one meeting, have already been discussed, and are ready for a vote. You should not have to spend more than 5 minutes on matters to be voted on. If the Board has been candid and the discussion and study have been thorough, there is no reason to spend a lot of time in this section.

This would also be the place where the financial reports would be reviewed and approved.

If you are currently frustrated by Board meetings, you are not alone. Every pastor has been there, and most of us have dreamed of a world without committees. But the truth is we need our board members. They give perspective, experience, and strength that we don't have alone. A well-managed board actually multiplies the efforts of the pastor and staff in accomplishing the ministry of the local church. Using an agenda effectively helps the Board keep focused and will improve their efficiency without increasing the time spent in Board meetings.