



Chapter 3

Bringing Life to Club Meetings





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BRINGING LIFE TO MEETINGS

Meetings are a significant part of the Lions Club experience and have a big impact on how the association is perceived by members. Meetings are also important to the efficient functioning of your club.



Holding effective meetings will accomplish two things:

1. Keeping members interested
2. Keeping your club running successfully

EVALUATING YOUR CURRENT MEETINGS

Research regarding Lions Clubs consistently indicates that the main reason for membership loss in a club is lengthy/boring meetings. Therefore, the club leadership should take a few minutes and honestly evaluate how well club meetings are going.

- Are your meetings well attended?
- Do you notice any attendance trends?
- How do your members act during meetings? Do they seem interested? Enthusiastic? Bored? Impatient?
- After meetings, do members feel inspired and motivated?
- What is the atmosphere during meetings? Friendly? Tense? Lively? Boring?

The presiding officer should also candidly and honestly look at his or her own performance:

- Are you comfortable running meetings?

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- Do you regularly prepare an agenda in advance?
- Do you follow your agenda?
- Do you have a good command of parliamentary procedure?
 - Are you able to handle interruptions and difficult behavior?
- Do you convey excitement and enthusiasm for being a Lion?
- Do you allow members to actively participate in meetings?
- Do you willingly accept suggestions?

Once the leadership has reviewed and honestly answered these questions, it would be wise to get input from the members, as well.



Included in this chapter, is a sample questionnaire that can be handed out to the members of a Lions Club to assist them in helping the club leadership understand how effective the club meetings are. The club leadership, possibly at a Board of Directors Meeting, should then study the answers to the

surveys and note the following:

- What trends do you see?
- What are strengths of your club meetings?
- What are weaknesses of your club meetings?
- Which areas need attention?
- Were you surprised at the responses you received?



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- Was there a big difference between your assessment of your club meetings and your fellow members' assessment?

After examining feedback, decide which areas need attention. Use your best judgment when evaluating results. Certainly, if you notice recurrence of a negative comment, you should look for strategies for solving that particular problem. You might find that there are areas where you thought the club excelled, where members think otherwise. Depending on the answers, perhaps all that is needed are a few small changes. However, there may be situations where some members of the club feel strongly one way and other members feel strongly another way. In these circumstances, you must consider what would be best for the club. If your club is trying to attract, new younger members, pay particular attention to the comments of those current members who are in the same demographic group you are trying to reach. If a



comprehensive meeting makeover is in order, create a plan using the suggestions below. When making changes, it might take some time before you notice positive results. That is to be expected—if changes are dramatic, it may take everyone a while to get used to the new routine.

Your club members' involvement in this process doesn't have to stop with the evaluation. Report your findings and the changes you will make to improve your club. Enlist members' enthusiastic participation and

support. Together, you can make your meetings more productive and interesting for all involved.

SETTING A CLUB AGENDA

The most important aspect of a well-run club meeting is organization. As club presidents would agree, having a detailed agenda is critical to a successful meeting. The president of your club should choose to include in the agenda all-important items; however, the president should also limit and shape the agenda so that it is relevant to what is coming up. For example, announcing and having a report on an activity coming in the month of May, may not be an efficient use of club's meeting time in January. The presiding officer must be very careful in choosing what should be included on an agenda. Also, club leaders often feel that their particular project or activity is most important. A tactful club president must make sure that the leader has an adequate opportunity to brief the club on the activities, without consuming the overall agenda.

Below is a typical outline for a dinner type meeting.



As a rule of thumb, this meeting anticipates the club gathering for no more than one and one-half hours, including the meal. Most reviews and statistics have shown that if a club meeting is of longer duration, the membership will grow restless. It is the role of the club president to keep meetings timely.



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A typical agenda:

7:00 President Promptly Calls Meeting to Order

(Even if members are still mulling around and not all are in their seats)

7:01 Invocation

7:03 Pledge to the Flag

7:04 Welcome and Introduction of Guests

7:07 Sunshine Report

(Report of illnesses, special events in Lions and their families)

7:10 Secretary's Report

(If business is normally conducted only at Board of Director's meeting, the secretary's report should not be included in a full club meeting)

7:14 Meal

(Leader should make sure that he is toward the front of any line of buffet or is served first by wait staff. Only 20 minutes should be left for parties to get served and their meals. Members and guests should be reminded to feel free to finish their meals, but that in the interest of time, the evening's meeting will continue. It is highly inappropriate and insulting to other persons to wait before starting the club program, to make sure the last person has finished his meal. Twenty minutes is adequate time for service and/or buffet line to be complete before the program resumes. This keeps meetings flowing and prevents those who finished first from feeling bored waiting on the last to finish.)

7:34 Introduction of Program

(The introduction of the speaker should be very brief. The speaker's comments are what are important.)

7:37 Program



(Before inviting a person to speak at the club, the program committee should make it perfectly clear that the speaker has no more than 20 minutes to complete their presentation. Making this clear in advance prevents embarrassment of the club president and the speaker. The speaker should be reminded that when the president stands up, his time is finished.)

7:57 President's Appreciation Remarks to Program Presenter

8:00 Tale Twister

(The Tale Twister, just like the speaker, should be given strict instructions as to the amount of time allowed. Effective Tale Twisting is brief and fast paced. Long-winded Tale Twisters that take more than the 10 minutes indicated here only drag meetings on.)

8:10 Business Portion of the Meeting

(This is when committee reports are given and the business of the club is conducted. During this portion of the meeting, the president should take special care to keep reports and business as concise and to the point as possible.)

8:25 President's Wrap Up

(The president should conclude the meeting with a brief recap of important dates and events coming up. The president should avoid restating all of the previous reports. For example, the president might say, "as a friendly reminder, the Health Fair is next weekend; White Cane Day is on April 25; etc.)

8:30 Adjournment

In setting the business portion of the agenda, it is important for the president to ask the following questions:



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- What are the items currently on the typical agenda?
- Did the club members surveyed, identify agenda items that they feel are extraneous, and make the meetings boring or too long?
- Do the items on the agenda reflect your club's personality?
- Are the most important, upcoming events put first in the business session so that if time is running out, later events can be dropped from the agenda?

Keeping your agenda as lean as possible is a hard job; however, trimming the time will reward both you and the members of your club. A club president discussing, at Board meetings, the need for brevity can go a long way toward streamlining a meeting.

PROGRAM POINTERS

Brief and effective programs at club meetings keep meetings lively, interesting, entertaining, and educational for members. They can enrich your members personally and professionally. There are many places to find good programs. They include:

- **Recipients of Club Service**
– Hearing from those who have benefited from club efforts is a great way to motivate members to continue their dedication to serving those in need.
- **Local Community Leaders**
– Such as a mayor, members of congress, chief of police, school superintendent, etc. Not only will





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your club benefit from their programs, but also you will have the opportunity to introduce these influential people to your club members.

- **Local Business People** – Such as representatives from your members' companies, Chamber of Commerce, or Convention and Visitor's Bureaus can be very interesting, however such programs must not become an advertisement for that business. Properly educating the prospective program presenter about your expectations is critical. For example, inviting a financial planner to your club might prove to be a very interesting program. Talking with that financial planner in advance to make sure that person understands that they should share educational material is welcome. Most speakers quickly understand that a 20-minute commercial is not appropriate. Your program chair should feel free to be open and honest with prospective speakers, but if he or she is not willing to conform to standard etiquette at the Lion's Club, that program should not be presented. A business leader may not realize, but an educational program will do more to promote his business than any attempt to commercialize a Lion's Club meeting.
- **Cultural Organizations** – Such as museums, historical societies, theatres, and orchestras. Interesting and informative programs from these organizations are a good way to add variety.
- **School and Youth Groups** – Often young people need opportunities to make presentations to fulfill requirements for awards or activities. 4-H, scouts, and similar type groups have young people that need the opportunity to make public presentation, and they make excellent programs.



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- **Club Partners** – Such as Special Olympics and Habitat for Humanity and other groups that partner with your club to provide much needed community services.
- **District Committee Chairman** – Your district Lions Chairmen are more than willing to provide programs on the topics under their responsibility. Many clubs make it a habit to assure that about 50 percent of their club programs are on Lions related projects. To fulfill that need, district committee chairs and district leaders provide excellent programs.



When you schedule programs, intersperse topics for variety and timeliness. For example, a program about the districts involvement in the Lions International Peace Poster contest should be scheduled in advance of the deadline to purchase contest kits. Be sure to communicate to the speaker how much time they have for the program. Let them know that your club president has prepared a signal, like standing up behind the speaker, to let him/her know that the allotted time is completed. It is a good idea to let the speaker know about his/her audience so the presentation can be tailored appropriately.

Most persons invited to your club are appreciative of the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with your club. Partnering with that person will make a rewarding experience for both of you. The speaker gets



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their message across to the club effectively, and the club members benefit from the receipt of the knowledge.

It is often a good idea to have a few programs ready that can be called upon quickly and easily in the event of a last minute cancellation. Some ideas for quick programs include:

- Presenting the International Program Video and discussing how your club is contributing to the Association's goal for the year
- Holding Membership Recruitment "Summit" and brainstorming creative ways your club can recruit new members
- Having your Public Relations Chairman report on the status of publicity efforts in the community.

You may want to have these Lions prepared standing ready in the wings to present these last minute programs. You can also ask members if they have any "non-Lion" programs that one of them can have available at the last minute. Keep a list of these "emergency" programs on hand and be prepared to act quickly.

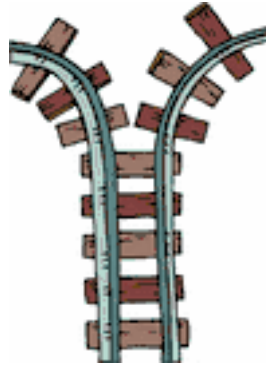
STAYING ON TRACK

If you are the club president, it is your job to adhere to the agenda and get the meeting back on track whenever necessary. This is a place where your knowledge of parliamentary procedure and your ability to assert yourself will be very useful. You need to remain in control of the proceedings. Your members will look to you to lead, and conducting meetings is one of the primary ways you



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demonstrate your leadership skills. Whether at a board meeting or at the business portion of a traditional meeting, a form of parliamentary procedure will help your meetings run smoothly and efficiently and guarantee that the proceedings are fair for all participants. Without established ground rules, meetings can easily become disorganized and unmanageable, regardless of the president's skill.



Asserting yourself when appropriate is a skill you become more comfortable with after time and experience. Utilizing your skills, you can keep the meeting on track while still letting club members know you value their participation. You may have authority tested every once in a while. It may be because the member is impatient, doesn't understand parliamentary procedure, or is excited or angered about something. No matter what the situation, you must stay calm and focused. If the situation is a misunderstanding about meeting ground rules, explain to the member how he or she should address his or her question, comment, or concern. If it is not the time for discussion on the topic; therefore explain this and let the member know when it will be handled.

ATTENDANCE IS INFECTIOUS

How you conduct yourself during meetings will have a big effect on attendees. Do you enjoy conducting meetings? Are you excited about being a Lion? If you exude confidence and enthusiasm, your membership will mirror these feelings. If you are unduly uncomfortable or



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bored, your membership will be influenced by these negative feelings, as well.

If you are not comfortable speaking in public or conducting a meeting, there are helpful resources available with many tips and suggestions for improving your performance. Consult your local library for guides or contact the Extension and Membership Division of Lions International's headquarters for assistance. A thorough knowledge of your club's ground rules (parliamentary and the constitutional bylaws) will improve your comfort level. It is also advisable to practice your delivery whenever possible. Nobody expects you to be perfect. Projecting confidence and enthusiasm, even if you don't always feel completely confident in your abilities, will go a long way toward inspiring and motivating your club members.

MIX IT UP

Keep your club members fresh by trying something new every once in a while. Consider asking members to change where they sit every few meetings to encourage camaraderie with new people; add a quick new agenda item to boost the morale. Here are a few ideas about special meetings that you can hold:

- Theme nights related to holidays
- Picnics
- Other theme nights non--holiday related—such as a luau, hoedown or costume night

TYPES OF MEETINGS

The bulk of this chapter has focused on a traditional club meeting: a gathering of the full membership. It is important to note that Lions Clubs have other types of meetings. Typically, the Board of Directors of the club conducts most of the “business” type of meetings. Likewise, there are committee meetings where the business of the club is conducted. Business meetings should be equally set to an agenda. It may be wise to start such a business session by having the agenda



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printed and shared by all members. If there are additional items to be added, people should speak up. If not, the agenda is set for the meeting. By having a copy at such business meetings, the written agenda lets members know what additional reports and items are ahead. The flow of the meeting goes better for all concerned.

EVALUATION

The best way to find out how your club feels about the club meetings is to simply ask the members. On the next page is a simple evaluation form that can be used to let members share their views about your club meetings. By using this form, club leaders can learn what members want from club meetings.



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Club Meeting Questionnaire

Please help us evaluate the quality of our club meetings by taking a few minutes to complete this survey. Your input is important to our club. Use the 1-5 rating values below. Please return survey to: _____ by _____.

Always: 5 Often: 4 Sometimes: 3 Seldom: 2 Never: 1

Please use the space underneath each question to add comments. If necessary, use the back of this sheet for additional comments.

- 1) Our meetings start on time. _____
- 2) Our meetings follow a regular agenda. _____
- 3) Our club president keeps the meeting running efficiently. _____
- 4) Our meetings have agenda items that are unnecessary. _____

Please describe:

- 5) I like attending club meetings. _____
- 6) Our meeting format allows everyone the opportunity to participate and communicate.

- 7) Our meeting atmosphere is friendly. _____
- 8) New members and guests are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome. _____
- 9) Guests are properly introduced. _____
- 10) Our meeting programs are varied. _____
- 11) I would like to see a presentation/program on

- 12) Our meeting programs are interesting. _____
- 13) Guests are given enough time to complete their presentation. _____
- 14) The tail twister is a fun addition to our meetings. _____
- 15) Various committees give progress reports. _____
- 16) Our club president has the ability to deal with difficult behavior and interruptions. _____

I believe these are our club meeting's strengths:

These are the primary areas I think need improvement:

I would like to make the following suggestions:
