

## \*\* RUNNING MEETINGS \*\*

1 hour, 10 minutes  
One facilitator  
Six or more participants

### **PURPOSE:**

For participants to learn how to hold a meeting.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- (1) To develop a list of factors that contribute to ineffective meetings;
- (2) To make a list of elements of a good meeting; and,
- (3) To gain practice running a meeting effectively.

### **METHODS:**

- (1) Things that interfere with having a good meeting {10 minutes}

Have the participants draw from personal experiences by asking them to name something bad that happened at the last meeting they attended (examples can be from any type of meeting: PTA, school board, staff meeting at work, etc.). Go around the room – TTMALGA00 and have each participant give one example. Write the responses on newsprint. Continue around the room until nobody has any more “bad things” that can happen at a meeting.

Some example comments:

- No decision was reached
- Too long
- No clear purpose for meeting
- No agenda
- Many people talking at once
  
- Got sidetracked frequently
- Boring
- Didn't know each other
- Poor seating, bad lighting
- Didn't start or end on time
  
- Didn't accomplish anything
- Not enough people talked or participated
- Ineffective chairperson
- A few people dominated the meeting
- No fun
- People didn't leave with things to do
- Same thing discussed over and over
- Sparse attendance

(2) Elements of a good meeting

{20 minutes}

Ask the participants to develop a list of elements for a good meeting. Write each element on newsprint and discuss each one before moving on to the next.

An example list of some basic elements of a good meeting:

- Have a clear **PURPOSE**- why have a meeting? What do we want to accomplish? Why would other people want to attend? Is it necessary to meet? How will it build the organization?
- **PLAN** the meeting- When will it be? Where will it be? Who should we invite? How will we notify people to attend? What do we want to do at the meeting? What unexpected things might happen at the meeting? Who is our audience? What other events may be going on the same night?
- Have an **AGENDA**- once we have decided what we want to do; we have to decide what order we want to do it in. Be sure everyone knows what the agenda is; post the agenda or pass around a copy of it. We want to decide (in advance) how long we want to spend on each agenda item so we can accomplish everything on time. Stick to the agenda during the meeting.
- Have a **CHAIRPERSON**- This person facilitates discussion at the meeting. Basically, the chairperson acts as a referee by keeping order, starting and ending the meeting on time, giving everyone a chance to speak and not letting some speak too much, keeping things moving, sticking to the agenda, making people feel comfortable and getting the group a few assistants to help if the chairperson had trouble keeping order. (The facilitator may have to explain the simple use of motion-second-discussion-vote.)
- Maximize **PARTICIPATION**- Get as many people as possible to speak (but not at the same time, of course) so everyone has a chance to express opinions and ideas. Creativity might be needed to get “loud mouths” to keep quiet for a while so that shy people get to talk. Also, people can do more than just speak—there may be a letter writing session, singing, etc.
- Reach a **DECISION**- be sure to reach a decision on each thing discussion. If a decision cannot be reached by consensus, take a vote. Just be sure something is decided before moving on so it is not brought up again and again. Decisions help give the group a sense of accomplishment—getting done the business everyone set out to do.
- **GIVE EVERYONE SOMETHING TO DO**- Once a decision has been made what to do, decide who’s going to do it and when they will have it done. Spread out the responsibility. Have each person leave with at least one thing to do.
- Make sure someone does **FOLLOW-UP** so that things that were planned actually get done.

[Helpful tips: At the very beginning of this training, post a simple agenda of what will be discussed: (1) Bad meetings; (2) Good meetings; and (3) Meeting role-play. Refer back to this agenda during the session to help drive the point home about the importance of agendas. Also, when you get on the topic of maximizing participation, call on someone (by their first name) who has not said much, to get them to say something. Then explain to the group why you did this—so they see an example of how to encourage people to

participate. When someone else, preferably a talkative person, begins to talk, politely cut them off, or say, "Hold on" or "Time out," in order to show the group how to keep someone from dominating the discussion. Use similar techniques to demonstrate other points.]

(3) Practice running a meeting {40 minutes}

Begin by explaining what a role-play is and what this role-play will involve. Each person will receive a piece of paper containing a description of a role they are to assume. Explain that they are to act out the role assigned to them as if they were actually that type of person. The facilitator should give some thought to who is assigned to each role. It may be helpful to assign a role that is completely different from what each particular person is like. For instance, a talkative person may assume a shy role. Be selective about who you assign as chairperson since this will be an important role. Also select an assistant to help the chairperson. Pass out the role description. Announce that you are going to meet with the chairperson and his/her assistant for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, everyone should think about their roles and review the elements of a good meeting. (Remind them not to tell each other which role they were given!)(5 minutes)

Find a quiet place where you can meet with the chairperson and the assistant. Review how to keep order. Hand them the agenda for the mock meeting. Explain that the agenda should be followed, sticking to the time allotted for each agenda item. Things to emphasize are: keep things moving, stick to the subject, get everyone to participate, and try to make sure everyone has something to do by the end of the meeting. (The assistant should make sure that these things are all being done. If they are not being done, the assistant should, for example, say "let's get back to the subject," or ask someone a question to get them to participate, etc.) (5 minutes)

After 5 minutes, the chairperson should call the group together and begin the meeting. The chairperson should bring everyone's attention to the agenda. (post the agenda on a sheet of newsprint that has already been prepared in advance.) Next, the chairperson should introduce the first topic by asking the group, "What fund-raising project should we do?" After some discussion, the group should be prompted to reach decisions: What are they going to do? When are they going to do it? And Who's going to do it? Finally, adjourn on time. (The facilitator may need to assume any role appropriate in order to maximize the learning that takes place.) (roleplay-15 minutes)

DEBRIEFING/EVALUATION of the role-play. First, make it clear the role-play is over. Everyone is her/himself again. Ask what went well about the meeting. Turn to the chairperson, then the assistant chairperson and let them have the first chance to comment. Then throw the question out to the entire group: "What was good about the meeting?" Next, ask : "That could have been done better?" Again, ask the chairperson, assistant, so forth. Try to establish a tone where the group can offer constructive criticism, yet not hurt anyone's feelings. After some discussion, empathize that running good meetings takes a lot of practice (and a lot of preparation!), but it is a skill anyone can learn. Finally, compliment everyone for playing their roles so well. Close this session on a positive note. (Optional: pass out handouts on meetings). (15 minutes)

**PRODUCTS/OUTCOME:**

- (1) A list of things that can make meetings ineffective;
- (2) A list of the basic elements of a good meeting; and,
- (3) Practice running meetings.

**MATERIALS:**

Newsprint, markers. Pieces of paper with roles (enough for each participant plus a few extra), role play meeting agenda written on newsprint to post during the role play, meeting handouts (optional), tape, easel and KFTC tabloid on running meetings (if available, as a hand out at the end).

## MEETING ROLE-PLAY: Choosing a Fundraiser

[Note to facilitator: These roles are ranked in order of importance. For example, if there are 7 participants, use the first 7 role descriptions. Always bring extra role descriptions in case more people show up—use roles marked “good member” for your extras. Cut each role out separately and pass them out to the appropriate people.]

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### I. CHAIRPERSON

Call meeting to order. Present agenda. Introduce first topic by asking, “What should we do for a fundraiser?” Get some discussion going. (Remember, keep order, stick to the subject, get everyone to participate, and keep things moving.) Stick to the agenda and try to stay within the time planned for each agenda item. After some discussion, get the group to agree on something and reach a decision. If you can’t get them to agree, you may have to take a vote. Once the group decided what they want to do, have them decide when to do it and who’s going to do it. Try to make sure everyone leaves with something to do. Lastly, adjourn the meeting on time! Good luck!

Here’s the agenda you are to follow. (There will be a poster of this agenda hanging up in the meeting room which you should point out to the group.)

1. Call to order/Explain agenda
2. Fund-raising (Ask: "What should we do for a fund-raiser?")

Have the group decide the following:

- a. What will we do?
  - b. When will we do it?
  - c. Who’s going to do it?
3. Adjourn

After 10 minutes of discussion, the group should have decided what to do. Give the group another 5 minutes to decide when to do the fundraiser, and who’s going to do what. Total meeting time: 15 minutes. Be sure to end on time.

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## II. CHAIRPERSON'S ASSISTANT

Your job is to help the chairperson when needed. The chairperson cannot possibly expect to do everything just right so you help out whenever you think the chairperson needs you. If someone starts to dominate the meeting, help the chairperson keep that person quiet long enough for others to have their say. You can also help the chairperson keep order, stick to the agenda, get everyone to participate, and keep things moving. One of the chairperson's hardest tasks will be to end the meeting within 15 minutes, yet still get everything accomplished. The group should have decided what to do after 10 minutes. If they haven't reached a decision, help the chairperson get the group to agree on something. Then it should take no more than 5 minutes to decide when to do the fundraiser and who's going to do what. Try to get everyone to volunteer to do at least one thing at the end. Good luck!

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## III. RAFFLE FANATIC

You love raffles. You think raffles are the greatest thing in the world. And you want this group to do a raffle as its fundraiser. Suggest having a raffle and rally try to convince the group that it's the best fundraiser there is.

If someone suggest another type of fund-raiser, tell them a raffle would be better. You don't care what the group raffles, just so they have a raffle. One of the reasons you want a raffle is because you can't stand bake sales. Bake sales are a lot of work, everyone has them, and besides, you don't like sweets.

If the rest of the group doesn't want to have a raffle you may have to give in at the end, but do your best to convince them of the raffle!

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#### IV. SWEET TOOTH

You want to have a bake sale. It's something that everyone can get involved in and they raise a lot of money. Bake sales usually go over pretty big around here, and besides, you love sweets! Try to convince the group to have a bake sale. Be assertive when trying to persuade them.

If someone suggests another type of fundraiser, tell them a bake sale would be better. You don't like raffles because it's hard to get out and sell enough tickets to make it worth while. You also think raffles are a form of gambling.

If the group doesn't want to have a bake sale, you may have to give in at the end, but do your best to convince them.

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#### V. COMPROMISER

Don't say much at first, until you've heard other people's ideas. If there's some disagreement, maybe you could think of a way to combine people's ideas and suggest this to the group. For example, if one person wants to have a bake sale and another wants to have a raffle, maybe you could do both. You could sell raffle tickets at your bake sale and make more money that way, without all that much work involved. Try to get the group to agree on your compromise if they like the idea. But don't be pushy.

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#### VI. QUIET PERSON

You are very shy. In fact, you are practically scared to death to talk to a group. You have some good ideas about fundraisers but you're too scared to talk. Only talk if the chairperson or someone else calls on you and asks for your opinion. If no one calls on you, just sit there and don't say anything.

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## VII. RAMBLER

You like to talk a lot you constantly get off subject. You like to talk about your kids and your neighbors, your neighbor's children, etc. Keep talking unless the chairperson cuts you off.

Try to start talking again after a little while, but if the chairperson does a good job at cutting you off and asking you to stick to the agenda, then you'd better stay quiet for a while.

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## VIII. FRIENDLY PERSON

You like to be agreeable with everyone. If someone suggests something, tell them you think that's a good idea. You just like to go along with the group. Whatever they decide is best. You really don't care which fundraiser the group decides on, just so everyone can agree on something and work on it together.

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## IX. GREAT COOK

You're a great cook (but of course, you don't brag on yourself). You like bake sales a lot and would be willing to help any way you could. If the group wants to have a bake sale, let them know that you would be willing to bake some of your homemade ginger cookies and your delicious red velvet cake. You even have tables and chairs they could use for the bake sale. You're willing to help with any fund-raiser the group decided to do.

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## X. QUILTER

You do a lot of quilting and you would be willing to donate one of your homemade quilts, if the group would like to do a raffle. But, if the group decides on another find-raiser, you'd be willing to help out any way you could.

## XI. NEW MEMBER

This is the first meeting you have attended with this group. You are a bit uncomfortable because you don't know too many people here, but you have heard some good things about the group and you would like to become more involved.

You are hesitant to volunteer for anything because you don't really know what you are getting into. But if someone asks you to help out by doing some specific things that you think you could do, agree to help because you really would like to feel that you are a part of this group.

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## XII. SLEEPY PERSON

You had to work late last night so you didn't get much sleep. You are really tired, and you are not too interested in fundraisers. A few minutes after the meeting begins, you become so bored and tired that you start to nod off and eventually fall asleep. Do it discreetly (no snoring!). Simply close your eyes. Don't wake up unless the chairperson calls on you if you don't get called on, just keep sleeping. Sweet dreams!!

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## GOOD MEMBER

You are an active member of this group. You really agree that the group should have a fundraiser because it could do a lot of good with the money raised. But, you really don't care what type of fund-raiser the group decides on. You're willing to go along with any good idea. Help the group agree on something, then volunteer to help out in some way on the fund-raiser.

## Notes on a revised design

Session: RUNNING MEETINGS

Facilitator: Beverly May

Group: KFTC Annual Meeting

Date: October 19, 1985

This session was designed for use at the October 19, 1985, KFTC annual meeting. The session lasted 45 minutes, including the icebreaker. Participants came from a variety of groups with which KFTC works. The revised design just changed Objective #3— Method #3—Product #3 of the original design as follows:

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- (3) To participate of observe effective chairing skills.

### **METHODS:**

- (3) Chairing skills {10 minutes}

The facilitator should ask for examples of ways to cut off people who talk too much and draw out people who might be afraid to talk. Then the facilitator should ask one or two participants to practice cutting a volunteer off. (Make sure the volunteer knows his/her role before the session). The facilitator should set up a role-play in which one person brings up an inappropriate point during a meeting on fund-raising. Participants should practice cutting him/her off. Evaluate after each and practice with as many as time allows.

[helpful tips: At the very beginning of this training, post a simple agenda of what will be discussed: (1) Bad meetings; (2) good meetings; (3) Chairing role play. Refer back to this agenda during the session to help drive the point home about the importance of agendas.]

### **PRODUCTS/OUTCOME:**

- (3) Some participants practiced chairing skills.

[The role for the role play are not needed in this revised design.]

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The revised design worked well. The group volunteered responses quickly and it helped that the participants had been involved in prior training sessions. Also, it helped that the participants had clear questions about meetings that they wanted answered.