UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

IFAS EXTENSION

Effective Meetings[1]

Lisa A. Guion and Elizabeth B. Bolton[2]

Objectives:
By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:
- ✓ Describe what should be done to prepare for a meeting
- ✓ Discuss three strategies for getting a meeting off to a good start
- ✓ Discuss three strategies for creating an atmosphere of participation
- ✓ Discuss three strategies for moving a meeting forward to get results
- ✓ List three tips for ending the meeting on a positive note
- ✓ List three ways to follow up with committee members after a meeting

Advance Preparation:
- ✓ **Read Background Section – THIS IS IMPORTANT!!**
- ✓ Prepare index cards with characters in the "Meeting of the Marching…" role play
- ✓ Prepare the chart for Meeting Jeopardy on a flipchart or chalkboard (see example)

Materials Needed:
- ✓ Flip chart and easel with markers OR chalkboard and chalk
- ✓ 5 large index cards (5"x7") prepared with role play descriptions on them
- ✓ Prize for the Meeting Jeopardy winner or team (such as pens, candy, etc)
- ✓ One copy of the following handouts for each participant: A) List of Meeting Characters, B) Advisory Committee Meeting Planning Checklist, C) Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, D) Non-formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, E) Meeting Ground Rules for Success, F) First Meeting Group Decisions, G) How to End Meetings and Get Results, H) Sample Follow-up Letter for Absent Committee Members
- ✓ Costumes and Props (**OPTIONAL**)
  - Meeting Maker - tailor/seamstress attire, tape measure, scissors, pattern, agenda, calendar, day timer
  - Meeting Minder - businessman/woman attire, agenda, bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order, and committee member job descriptions
  - Meeting Mover - train conductor or pilot attire, agenda with a checklist, clip board with pencil hanging on string
  - Conflict Causer- wicked witch attire (get from the Halloween party or theme store), a crumbled agenda
  - Meeting Killer- grim reaper in all black with a torn agenda, skull head and dagger (get from Hallowe'en party theme store)

Time Needed: 3 hours

BACKGROUND

Organized meetings are important for the success of advisory committees as well as any other group. Whether monthly or quarterly, meetings provide groups the opportunity to meet face-to-face to develop group identity and cohesion; define a shared vision and purpose; and develop special projects, tasks and activities. While most of the actual work performed by the group occurs between meetings, meetings serve as catalysts for measuring progress towards tasks, sharing ideas, group decision making, and group recognition. If properly planned, meetings can be effective. Effective meetings are efficient, results focused, and motivating.

Effective meetings efficiently use participant's time. The meeting chair takes steps to recruit influential leaders in the community with a large network of contacts and program area expertise. Because these individuals are very busy, each meeting should maximize their time. This unit presents strategies for more efficient meetings.

An effective meeting is result focused, because it evokes a sense of accomplishment among participants, is action oriented, and gets clear results. Individuals should leave the meeting with a sense that the group has achieved the objectives of the meeting. Everyone should be clear on the action that has been taken (progress of the group) and what is needed (action steps) after the meeting. Everyone must also be clear on who is responsible for various tasks. This orientation towards actions helps keep the group focused and fosters a sense of achievement in even the smallest of successes.

Effective meetings motivate people to take action and become involved in the projects and activities that the committee undertakes. Effective meetings also motivate people to come back to the next meeting. The bitter truth is that volunteers will go to a meeting if they feel that it is worth their time. This unit will share tips for making meetings more motivating.

This lesson contains practical information on planning and conducting effective meetings. Topics covered include preparing for the meeting, getting the meeting off to a good start, creating an atmosphere for participation, moving the meeting forward to get results, ending the meeting, and following up after the meeting. Each topic highlights how to maximize meeting productivity and effectiveness.

Topic 1: Preparing for the meeting

Leading a meeting requires thorough planning. Decide the purpose of the meeting and put it in writing. It should be something you can measure or document. Don't write, "We will discuss solutions for production delays." Instead, be specific. "We will develop a plan to document causes of production delays."

Give all participants something to prepare for the meeting. This will make the meeting more significant to each group member. For problem-solving meetings, have the group read the background information necessary to get down to business in the meeting. Ask each group member to think of one possible solution to the problem to get everyone thinking about the meeting topic. For less formal meetings or brainstorming sessions, ask a trivia question related to the meeting topic and give the correct answer in the first few minutes of the meeting. These tips are sure-fire ways to warm up the group and direct participants' attention to the meeting objectives.

Ask committee members for a good meeting time. If the group is new, decisions about time, locations, and dates will be made at their first meeting (see First Group Meeting Decisions Handout). Arrange for a satisfactory meeting place a room that is large enough, has sufficient seating, and is conveniently located but isolated from excessive traffic, noise, and distractions.

Once you have determined the time and place, prepare a memo detailing the location and ending as well as starting times. Include the purpose of the meeting and, preferably, the agenda. Mention that people can call you to clarify agenda items prior to the meeting.

When participants have the agenda and access to background information before the meeting, it gives them sufficient time to prepare for any discussions or decisions that will occur during the meeting. This also saves time during the meeting. If attendees come to the meeting prepared, less time will be spent answering background information questions and more time for discussing the important issues. When distributing the agenda, remind participants that it's their responsibility to come prepared to the meeting!

If special data or visuals are needed, list them in the memo and clarify what each person should bring or prepare. A few days later, follow up with a phone call or personal contact to verify that your memo was received and the recipient is able to prepare and attend.

Topic 2: Getting the meeting off to a good start

Meetings must start precisely on time so as not to punish those who are punctual. This also sets the stage for how serious the chair is about making the meeting effective. Open the meeting with introductions. Clarify who will take minutes, prepare the action plan and deliver it to members after the meeting, and be responsible for any other procedural details that need attention.

State the purpose and review the agenda. Assign approximate times to each agenda item if you have not already done so. Explain that if the group gets off schedule, members will need to decide whether to table discussions until future meetings, refer the problem to a sub-group for study, agree to disagree and move on, or set the agenda aside and deal with the delay immediately. The chair may need to make decisions if the group cannot agree.

Clarify the ground rules. There are several effective ways to create ground rules. If time is an issue it may be necessary for you to simply list the ground rules for the group. Be sure to inquire whether the ground rules are agreeable.

A second way to create ground rules is to list those rules you commonly use, then ask for additional ground rules from the members. When somebody proposes a ground rule, ask the other participants if they agree to it. If most do, add it to the list.

The best way to create ground rules is to allow the members to generate the entire list. Ask them to think about what they, as individuals, need to ensure a safe environment to discuss difficult and controversial issues.

Topic 3: Creating an atmosphere for participation

There are many critical decisions that should occur at the first committee meeting. These decisions help to clarify meeting logistics. Everyone should feel comfortable in contributing to the decision-making process. Let's look at some examples of key decisions that a committee should make during their first meeting.

The chair is responsible for ensuring participation, focusing discussion, summarizing decisions, resolving conflict, and managing meeting dynamics. These techniques take time to master. The decisions made by the group must be documented. Participants also have a responsibility to promote

cooperation and mutual respect. The leader is instrumental in setting the tone, but participants are responsible for maintaining it.

When creating an atmosphere of participation, the chair should encourage group discussion to get all points of view. Turn questions back to the group for their input. Ask people to comment on something just said. Compliment people on their ideas and thank them for their input.   Ask open-ended questions.

The chair should engage everyone into the decision making process. He or she may need to ask the more quiet members for their thoughts, and tactfully interrupt the longwinded ones to move the discussion along. Encourage people who just want to agree with a previous speaker to say "Ditto" rather than taking the time to repeat her/his point.

Facilitation is the key to not spend too much time in non-productive discussions. If necessary, ask the group to agree to a time limit on a discussion that might take too long. You might want to agree to limit each speaker's time, or say that no one can speak a second time until everyone has spoken once. If the group is spinning its wheels and people are only repeating themselves, restate and summarize the issues and ask if there is at least the beginnings of consensus. If it just doesn't seem that the group can make a good decision right now, suggest tabling the matter until another time. You may want to ask someone to bring back more information, or form a committee to work on the issue.

Topic 4: Moving the meeting forward to get results

It's the chair's responsibility to keep the meeting on track. This means steering the meeting discussion in a way that fulfills the meeting objectives. If you have difficult personalities in the room or opposing views, this can be challenging! Try using sentences such as, *"That's a valid point, but doesn't directly apply to this discussion. Perhaps we should schedule a separate meeting to address it fully."* Or, *"It's obvious there are some opposing views surrounding this issue. Perhaps our time would be best spent working towards a compromise. Any suggestions?"* If a meeting becomes particularly heated, it's best to address what's possible in the meeting but consider hiring a professional facilitator for the next meeting – a neutral leader who's trained to deal with high-pressure, high-conflict meetings.

Topic 5: Ending the meeting

Every meeting should conclude with a summary of work completed, a clear action plan for outstanding tasks, and a decision about subsequent meetings. The summary should relate directly to the purpose: What was the goal? Was it achieved? What remains to be done?

The action plan should list specific tasks, the person(s) responsible, and the completion date for each. Resolve any confusion and adjust the plan as needed. Get the next meeting on the schedule while everyone is present. Check with participants in a few days to make sure they can complete follow-up tasks. The time you spend in preparation and follow-up will pay off with meetings that begin and end well.

An evaluation of the meeting should follow the session, even if the meeting continues longer than expected. Post-meeting evaluations provide immediate feedback to the facilitator and indicate the effectiveness and efficiency of the meeting relevant to its objectives.   Take a few moments at the end of the meeting to discuss what the group did well during the meeting and which areas need improving.

At the end of the meeting, the leader should review the action items, who's responsible and by when. This way, everyone has a clear picture of who's responsible for what when the meeting's over.

Once the meeting objective has been accomplished, adjourn the meeting. Even if it's thirty minutes earlier than expected! Don't continue meeting simply because that's what the schedule dictates. Let's look at more specific strategies for ending a meeting.

Topic 6: Follow-up after the meeting

Timely follow-up is critical for continued productivity. After the meeting is over, send the meeting information to all the participants. Make sure that the secretary or individual who took the minutes makes legible copies for the entire committee. Whether you provide the notes by e-mail or photocopied handouts, sharing this meeting information is vital for proper follow-up. Let's look at a sample letter to use when sending follow-up information for a meeting.

It's also a good idea to include a summary of all the action items assigned during the meeting. This acts as a reminder to all participants of who's responsible for what and by when. A written account of all assignments increases the obligation and urgency to complete the task.

INTEREST APPROACH

- ✓ Select six people to role play "Meeting of the Marching Magnificent Magnolias". Distribute the index cards with their character's description and ask them to pretend to be the character they've been assigned. Do not reveal who is assigned to which character.
- ✓ Once everyone involved in role play knows their part, distribute Attachment A "List of Meeting Characters" to everyone else in attendance. Ask the group to read the attachment to see what these characters are like, see if they can guess the characters during the role play and think about what could be done to plan and implement an effective meeting that takes into account each type of character.
- ✓ Conduct the role play using the script.
- ✓ After the role play, encourage the group to reflect on what happened by using the following questions:
  - o Think about what happened when a Conflict Causer or Meeting Killer was at work. Think about how the other committee members handled the situation. If you were in this similar situation, what else would you have done? What can be done to minimize the conflict that these characters create?
  - o Think about how having a Meeting Maker, Meeting Minder, and Meeting Mover helped make this meeting more effective. Think about people you have on your committee or would like to have on your committee who could serve in those roles. How would you work with those different types of people to make the meeting more effective? What can you do to keep these types of characters involved in your meetings?
  - o Are there other characters that you might know that attend meetings on a regular basis that "need to be recognized, acknowledged and dealt with" to move your meetings forward to get the best results? If so, think about how to work with those different types of people.

About the Characters: All of the characters are fictitious, but there are people who have some of these characteristics in almost every group. The object of this exercise is to have fun exploring these characters.

An alternative to this exercise would be to let each person read the script silently. Break up the audience into groups of 4-6 and ask them to discuss the reflection questions. One person from each of the small

groups can then report back to the larger group strategies that they recommend to help deal with the different types of characters.

LESSON

- ✓ Start the lesson by asking and discussing the following questions:
  - o Have you ever attended a meeting that seemed disorganized?
  - o After a meeting ended, have you ever wondered what was accomplished?
  - o Have you ever planned a meeting that did not seem to go over well with the attendees?
  - o Are you now in charge of committee, but have little experience running meetings?
- ✓ Explain that the purpose of this lesson is to look at meetings in a general context and see how we might be able to effectively plan and " move" our meetings forward to get the results that members desire.
- ✓ **Distribute the following handouts in the order presented and discuss each handout using the information you read in the Background section.** As you go through each handout ask the group to share their best or worst experiences with each topic. This fosters group interaction and acknowledges their personal experiences and expertise.
- ✓ Distribute a copy of the following handouts: Advisory Committee Meeting Planning Checklist (Attachment B), Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda (Attachment C) and Non-formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda (Attachment D).
- ✓ Distribute a copy of the handout entitled Meeting Ground Rules for Success (Attachment E). Ask committee members to volunteer to share which ground rule they feel is the most important and why.
- ✓ Distribute and discuss the handout entitled First Meeting Group Decisions (Attachment F).
- ✓ Distribute a copy of the handout entitled How to End Meetings and Get Results. (Attachment G). Ask members to share their experiences with good or bad meeting endings.
- ✓ Distribute a copy of the handout entitled Sample Follow-Up Letter for Absent Members (Attachment H).

APPLICATION

- ✓ Play "Meeting Jeopardy" based on the six main topics of the lesson.
- ✓ Divide the group into 2-3 teams or let individuals answer questions aloud.
- ✓ Ask a volunteer to keep score. Offer a prize to the winning team or individual.
- ✓ Emphasize the rules:
  - o Unlike the television version, there are no daily doubles and no final round.
  - o All participants must answer in the form of a question in order to receive points.
- ✓ Play the Game using the diagram you prepared earlier and the questions found in the Meeting Jeopardy attachment. Once a dollar amount is selected, mark it out on the board.

REFERENCES

Bolton, E. and L.A. Guion. 2002. *Building Coalitions: Facilitator Guide*. (EDIS Publication FCS9059-FYC494). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, Florida Cooperative Extension.

Boyd, B. A. 2001. *Fundamentals of Facilitation* (PowerPoint Presentation at VESA/VCE Conference). Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Carney, K. 2000. *Making Meetings Work, Harvard Business School communication*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hawkins, C. 1999. *First aid for meetings: Quick fixes and major repairs for running effective meetings*. San Francisco, CA:Bookpartners, Inc.

Iacofano, D.S. 2001. *Meeting of the minds: A guide to effective meeting facilitation*. Berkley, CA: MIG Communications.

Micale, F.A. 1999. *Not another meeting!: A practical guide for facilitating effective meetings.* New York, NY: Oasis Press.

McKinney, M.F. 1999. *Empowering advisory committee & councils: A hands-on, practical approach.* Seffner, FL: University of Florida, Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension.

Riggs. N.J. 1998. *Facilitating for results: A task-oriented approach to reaching consensus and taking action.* Ames, IA: Iowa State University, Iowa Cooperative Extension.

Script
Meeting of the Marching Magnificent Magnolias

Note: When doing the role play, do not use the character names, use the actual names of the volunteers so that participants can guess the character.

Meeting Maker notices chair is occupied, so he/she goes over to remind chair that it is time to start meeting.

Chair opens with greeting, appreciation for attending, and roll call either by sign in or voice announcement.

Meeting Minder determines if a quorum is present. If yes, he/she informs chair to proceed. If no, he/she cites which items on the agenda will have to be delayed until a quorum is present, then revises agenda accordingly and enjoys doing this.

Chair asks if there are other additions or deletions to agenda.

Chair calls attention to the minutes of the last meeting. If they have been sent out by mail, ask for additions or corrections. If they have not been sent out by mail, they should be read aloud and then ask for revisions and corrections. Chair makes sure that secretary records these revisions and corrections. The chair asks for a motion to approve the minutes.

Chair calls for a treasurer's report.

While treasurer is giving the report, *Meeting Killer* interrupts to propose a new expenditure.

Meeting Minder lets him/her know that it is out of order according to Robert's Rules of Order and that he/she should bring this up as a proposal under new business.

At the end of the treasurer's report, *Conflict Causer* starts a debate about some of the expenses and states that some costs seem too high. He/she wants to see receipts and bids to make sure the lowest price was paid for the goods and services.

Meeting Minder reminds everyone that the expenses were voted on and approved on March 4, 2002 and had already been paid. Therefore, it is not appropriate to second guess the expenses at this point.

Chair calls for other officer and committee reports. They follow the same process.

Chair announces that old business will be handled next. They start with a fund raising project. Chair asks the leader of project to give a report that includes a brief history of what has transpired thus far and what is proposed to do next. At the end of report, the chair asks for motion to accept the report and approve next steps, then asks for second. Chair asks for discussion and calls for questions.

Conflict Causer said that he/she was not going to support any fund raising efforts if the money is going to be spent on over priced goods and services.

Meeting Mover says that voting gives everyone an equal chance to decide how funds will be spent. Then goes further to say that right now the group needs to focus on helping identify opportunities for fund raising; partnerships with other organizations; new member recruitment on fund raising projects, etc.

Chair is careful to keep the discussion on topic and task and not allow one or more persons to dominate discussion. (This is important, because old and new business could be non-participatory in that reports may be given by one person. Also, the people on the committee are vested in the issue and may dominate discussion).

After the discussion ended and questions are addressed, the chair calls for a vote on the item. Secretary records information for inclusion in the written minutes, including who made the motion, seconded the motion, and the number of votes for and against.

Chair calls for new business. They follow the same process as they did with old business. ***(characters can ad-lib)***

Chair calls for announcements relevant to the committee. ***(characters can ad-lib)***

Chair summarizes what was accomplished at the meeting. The chair then announces the time, date, place, and importance of attending the next meeting. Chair thanks the secretary personally, and collectively thanks the officers, committee chairs, and all who attended. Tells them that their attendance serves the purpose of the organization. Chair adjourns the meeting on time if not a few minutes early.

MEETING JEOPARDY

PREPARE	GOOD START	PARTICIPATE	MOVE FORWARD	ENDING	FOLLOW UP
$100	$100	$100	$100	$100	$100
$200	~~$200~~	$200	$200	$200	$200
$300	$300	~~$300~~	$300	$300	$300
$400	$400	$400	$400	$400	$400
$500	$500	$500	$500	$500	~~$500~~

Prepare:

$100   A.   This outline helps keep meetings on track.
        Q.   What is an agenda?

$200   A.   Reading and approval of the minutes occurs in what type of meeting?
        Q.   What is formal?

$300   A.   What group of people should provide input in meeting location, time, and agenda items?
        Q.   Who is the committee? Who are meeting attendees?

$400   A.   These items should be secured prior to the meeting.
        Q.   What are meeting equipment and supplies (i.e., overhead projector, pens, paper etc.)

$500   A.   These steps are common in non-formal meetings.
        Q.   What are Action Steps?

Good Start:

$100   A.   These are guidelines that help to protect the rights of each committee member.
        Q.   What are ground rules?

$200   A.   You should do this carefully before responding to someone's comments.
        Q.   What is listen?

$300   A.   When everyone can agree on an issue to move the meeting forward.
        Q.   What is consensus?

$400   A.   Doing this ensures that punctual members are not punished for tardy members.
        Q.   What is starting on time?

$500   A.   This should be stated at the beginning of the meeting.
        Q.   What is the purpose?

10

Participate:

$100   A.   Name at least two decisions that groups should make at first meetings.
      Q.   (see first meeting group decision handouts for various answers)

$200   A.   This person is responsible for facilitating discussions.
      Q.   Who is the Chair or Leader?

$300   A.   This is done when discussions become stagnant.
      Q.   What is table?

$400   A.   Giving assignments or asking questions before the meeting does this.
      Q.   What is create interest?

$500   A.   The chair should maintain this tone at all times.
      Q.   What is stay positive?

Move Forward:

$100   A.   This type of person loves to argue in meetings.
      Q.   Who is a Conflict Causer?

$200   A.   This type of person makes an excellent chair.
      Q.   Who is the Meeting Maker?

$300   A.   You can count on this person to help keep your meetings on task.
      Q.   Who is the Meeting Mover?

$400   A.   This type of person loves for the meeting to loose focus.
      Q.   Who is the Meeting Killer?

$500   A.   This person makes a great parliamentarian.
      Q.   Who is the Meeting Mover?

Ending:

$100   A.   This is effective in determining how meetings can improve.
      Q.   What is evaluation?

$200   A.   Always end on what?
      Q.   What is time?

$300   A.   Having this after the meeting fosters team building.
      Q.   What is social interaction?

$400   A.   These are very popular and help to end the meeting on a positive note.
      Q.   What are affirmations?

$500   A.   These help facilitate task occurring at certain times.
      Q.   What are deadlines?

Follow-Up:

$100   A.   These should be sent soon after the meeting.
      Q.   What are meeting minutes?

$200   A.   Along with the time, this should be stated in the follow-up letter.
       Q.   What is the next meeting time?

$300   A.   This person should be responsible for sending the minutes and follow-up letter.
       Q.   Who is the secretary?

$400   A.   Other than the minutes, and follow-up letter what else should be sent to members?
       Q.   What is a list of action items and assignments?

$500   A.   This is good to do to remind attendees of their assigned tasks and to communicate with absent members.
       Q.   What is follow-up?

Effective Meetings Handouts
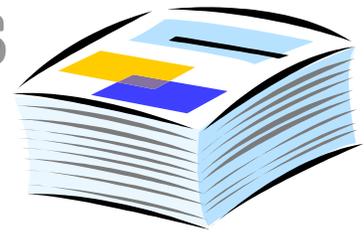
Attachment A: List of Meeting Characters

Attachment B: Advisory Committee Meeting Planning Checklist

Attachment C: Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Attachment D: Non-Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Attachment E: Meeting Ground Rules for Success

Attachment F: First Meeting Group Decisions

Attachment G: How to End Meetings and Get Results

Attachment H: Sample Follow-Up Letter for Absent Committee Members

Attachment I: Additional Group Exercise: Meeting Jeopardy

List of
Meeting Characters

Character 1 - Meeting Maker (description can be typed on an index card)

Costume (if possible): dressed like a tailor/seamstress with tape measure, scissors, pattern, agenda, calendar, day timer in hand

Hello, my job is to get the meeting off to a good start and make the meeting successful for all the members and officers present. I attend a lot of meetings. Unfortunately, at most of them I do not get all the time that I should. I do all those things that make the meeting interesting and purposeful. For this reason, I deserve quite a bit of time and attention. I see that the meeting starts on time, everyone is welcomed, the reports are made, the committees are appointed, that no one talks too much and that everyone has the chance to participate in the discussions. I make a "great" committee chair.

Character 2 - Meeting Minder (description can be typed on an index card)

Costume (if possible): dressed like businessman/woman with an agenda, bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order, and committee member job descriptions in hand

Hello, my name is Meeting Minder. I keep a close watch on the events of the meeting and can be a real friend to the chair. I provide the protocol for every event. When people forget to invite me every one is affected and the meeting is distorted in purpose and accomplishment. I know all the bylaws, Robert's Rules and the dates for significant meetings. I always have a calendar and a copy of the agenda. I see that these are followed. People like to see me attend the meeting because they know that someone will be watchful and helpful with all parts of the meeting. Although I am there to serve everyone, it is best if the chair stays close to my side.

Character 3 - Meeting Mover (description can be typed on an index card)

Costume (if possible): dressed like a train conductor or pilot, with an agenda that has a checklist, clip board with a pencil hanging on string

Hello, my name is Meeting Mover and my job is to keep the meeting moving on task, on time, and on the agenda. I am happy if the meeting is on task and moving in a forward direction with positive participation from the participants. I can get frustrated if the meeting is not focused. I might start at the beginning of the meeting, but can get pushed aside by some of the more negative characters that attend meetings. I make a great team with the Meeting Maker. The chair should watch for me and be sure to keep me on the job.

Character 4 - Conflict Causer (description can be typed on an index card)

Costume (if possible): dressed like a wicked witch (get from the Hallowe'en party or theme store) with a crumbled agenda in hand.

14

Hello, my job is to cause conflict among the members. I attend many meetings and sometimes no one attends because of the things I do. I feel good when people get in arguments, have hard feelings, don't understand the issue, and want their own way instead of trying to understand what the group needs to have done. I consider it a success when someone has a temper tantrum and storms out. I am silent when meeting maker, meeting mover, and meeting minder are all present and working together. There are few meetings when this happens and at most meetings I get to dominate a good deal of time. My presence causes people to do and say things they regret later.

Character 5 - Meeting Killer (description can be typed on an index card)

Costume (if possible): dressed like the Grim Reaper in all black with a torn agenda, skull head and dagger (get from Halloween party or theme store) in hand

Hello, my job is to kill a meeting and I can be very effective. I can cause the meeting to get so far side tracked that we run out of time before anything is accomplished. I can make other committee members get so frustrated that they just shut down and don't talk. Then, I can really take over. My best friend is Conflict Causer. He usually gets things started and I finish them. We are a great team and usually we work together. I am also very effective by myself.

Advisory Committee Meeting Planning Checklist

❑ Did I consider the committee when selecting a date, time and location?

❑ Did I give the members ample advance notice of the meeting?

❑ Did I convey the purpose of the meeting and why their attendance is important?

❑ Did I get input from the Committee Chairperson in developing the agenda?

❑ Did I prepare and distribute and agenda prior to the meeting?

❑ Did I send a reminder notice (or call) a few days prior to the meeting? Did I request a RSVP?

❑ Is my meeting room ready?
  ❑ Is my room arranged for maximum communication between members (facing each other)?
  ❑ Is the room comfortable (adequate light & temperature)?
  ❑ Do I have the necessary equipment and supplies?
  ❑ Does each chair have paper and pencil?
  ❑ Can each person see and hear the proceedings?
  ❑ Do I have individual ID tags on table or name tags if individuals do no know each other yet?

❑ Was I present to greet the committee as they arrived?

❑ Did I "THANK" the members for coming?

❑ Did we start the meeting on time?

❑ Did we adjourn at a reasonable time?

❑ Did I conduct the proper follow-up?
  ❑ Did I send follow-up correspondence with minutes attached?
  ❑ Did I communicate with those not in attendance?
  ❑ Did we establish a date and time for the next meeting?

❑ Did I follow through with recommendations and/or suggestions made by the Advisory Committee?

Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Call the Meeting to Order

Attendance (often done silently)

Review Agenda *(ask for additions)*

Reading and Approval of the Preceding Meeting's Minutes

Officer and Standing Committee Reports

Special or ad hoc Committee Reports

Old or Unfinished Business

New Business

Announcements

Adjourn

Non-Formal Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Welcome

Review Agenda *(ask for additions)*

Discussion Topic 1

Action Steps 1 *(who, what when, where, how)*

Discussion Topic 2

Action Steps 2

Announcements

Closing Remarks

Note: *Discussion topics can focus on progress reports for existing projects, planning, and assigning of roles for new projects etc.*

Meeting Ground Rules for Success

Your advisory committee may want to establish basic guidelines or group expectations for discussions in order to protect the rights of each member and to maintain order. The guidelines or expectations could include:

❖ Respect individual differences.

❖ Consider and/or accept opposing points of view.

❖ Express disagreement with ideas without criticizing.

❖ Avoid defensive behavior. (denying problems, changing topics, cutting off a speaker etc.)

❖ Allow others to talk without interruption.

❖ Listen carefully before responding.

❖ Restate what others have said for clarity.

❖ Demonstrate a willingness to compromise or seek consensus.

❖ Accept and publicly demonstrate support for group decisions.

❖ Leave disagreements at the meeting.

First Meeting Group Decisions

- ❖ **How often are meetings held? (quarterly, or biannually)**

- ❖ **Which day of week is best for meeting?**

- ❖ **Which time of day is best for meeting?**

- ❖ **Does the group want to set dates for the rest of the year?**

- ❖ **How members are notified of meetings? (delegate responsibility to a member, e-mail, written notices, phone calls or using phone tree)**

- ❖ **How meetings are conducted? (i.e. formally with parliamentary procedures or non-formally if not specified in the constitution or bylaws)**

- ❖ **What are the roles of the leaders of the advisory committee such as chair or secretary? (discuss each position)**

- ❖ **Who will take responsibility for key leadership positions? (chair, secretary, etc.)**

- ❖ **What will be the ground rules (see Attachment E for suggested ground rules) that can be posted at every meeting?**

How to End Meetings and Get Results

- ❖ **Change your meetings to "doings" -** Always treat meetings as an opportunity to create a plan, strategy, report, outline, idea etc. Have a specific purpose and desired outcomes distributed with the agenda.

- ❖ **Assign Tasks to People**– Specific action steps should always be assigned to specific individuals. If there are large tasks, make an individual a sub-committee chair to facilitate a smaller group.

- ❖ **Assign Deadlines** – Give individuals a definite time for completion of the task. A common deadline is by the next meeting.

- ❖ **Evaluate the Meeting** – Distribute a short survey that asks what the participants thought about the meeting and how future meetings can be more useful.

- ❖ **End on Time** – Participants tend to get disenchanted when meetings are too long or go over their time limit. Be extremely time conscious and end on time.

- ❖ **Be Prompt with Follow-Up** – Send all committee members a recap of the action steps and assignments within a few days following the meeting. This serves as a reminder and also as an update to absent members.

- ❖ **Provide Social Interaction -** Informal social interaction, usually in the form of refreshments, allows the committee members time to continue conversations from the meeting, meet with sub-committee members, or build informal networks.

- ❖ **End on a Positive Note** – Affirmations are very popular and provide a source of motivation to the group. Use inspirational quotes, motivational poems, or uplifting short stories.

- ❖ **Announce the Next Meeting, Time and Location**

Facilitating and Managing Group Participation

Follow-up Letter for Absent Committee Members

SAMPLE

Lisa A. Guion
555 South Gregson Street
Tampa, FL 123456

July 18, 2002

Ms. Jane Doe
Any Street
Anytown, FL 33333

Dear Jane:

I am enclosing the minutes/notes from the July 11, 2002 Advisory Committee Meeting. As you can see from the minutes, the meeting was very productive. However, we missed your presence and valuable input.

Plan now to attend our next meeting which is scheduled for Thursday, November 8, 2002 at the Extension Center beginning at 2:00 p.m. I will send the meeting agenda and other information in October.

Please contact me should you need any additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa Guion
Advisory Committee Secretary

Enclosure: Minutes of the July 1st meeting