

DP Forand
NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Committees That Work!

October 23, 2017

This session:

- Committee structures
- · What makes a good committee
- Effective committee meetings
- The use of committee charters
- Best practices for great committees

What is a committee?

A committee is a body of one or more persons appointed or elected by an assembly or society [or Board] to consider, or investigate, or take action in regard to certain matters or subjects, or to do all of these things.

- Robert's Rules of Order

What is a committee?

A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours.

- Milton Berle, Comedian and Actor

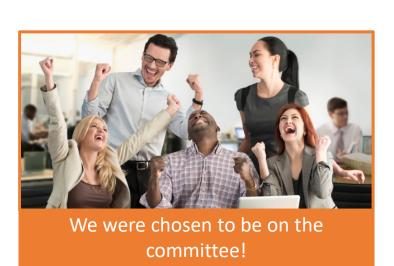
A committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled.

- Sir Barnett Cocks,
Clerk of the House of Commons



Committees: where good ideas go to sleep ...or worse

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Why form a committee?

Committees make effective and efficient use of time and resources by having the right small group

- investigate issues and identify pros and cons of various options
- develop proposals for action
- implement decisions as delegated

Board Responsibilities

- Duty of Care
- Duty of Loyalty
- Duty of Obedience

Committee Structure

- Standing Committees
 - Deal with ongoing issues
 - Last indefinitely
- Ad Hoc Committees
 - Created to accomplish a specific objective
 - Within a specific timeframe
 - Disband when work is done

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Committee Structure

- Unique to each organization
- Simple and flexible
- Bylaws (less is more)
- Limit number of committees to only those needed (supplement with ad hoc committees/task forces)

Committee Structure

Types of Committees

- Board Committees
- Organizational Committees

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Committee Structure

Board Committees

- Help do the work of the Board (governance)
- Take on policy and strategic work
- Help the Board fulfill its oversight and policymaking roles
- Report to the Board

Committee Structure

Organizational committees

- Help do the work of the organization (operations)
- Work on issues that usually are part of the staff's responsibility
- Help in program implementation.
- Work with staff or (for small orgs) take on role of staff
- Report to the staff

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What makes a good committee?

- Purpose
- People
- Process

Purpose

- Why is the committee being created?
- What is the relationship to the organization's mission, strategies and priorities?
- What is the benefit to the Board and organization?
- What are the committee's goal(s)?

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Process

- Clarity about role
- Specific objectives and deadlines
- Annual schedule of meetings
- Agreed-upon committee norms
- Job descriptions for members
- Orientation for new committee members

Process (continued)

- Committee reference book
- Thorough, timely information to members -- and to Board
- Tie the work back to the organization's mission
- Regular review of committee performance and structure

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People

- Diversity of skills, knowledge, perspective
- Size not too small, not too large
- Recruitment Why me?
- Opportunities for learning, leadership
- Everyone participates but no one is overloaded

People (continued)

- Operate as a team
- No more than 2 committees per person
- Recognition individuals and group
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Remove deadwood

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People: Committee members

Qualities of effective committee members:

- Commitment to mission
- Time to invest
- Understanding of committee's role
- Interested in work of committee
- Ability to compromise
- Responsible
- Strong work ethic
- Excellent interpersonal, communications and listening skills

People: Committee Chair

Qualities of an effective committee chair:

- Leadership
- Diplomacy
- Enthusiasm
- Ability to involve all committee members
- Respect and solid relationships
- Deep understanding of committee's work and relationship to organization
- Organizational skills (or someone to delegate to)

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Committee Meetings



If I die I hope it's during a meeting because the transition to death would be so subtle

Committee Meetings

- Clear objective(s)
- Future-focused
- Well-crafted agenda
- Start and end on time
- Brief and focused
- Use parking lot for off-topic discussions
- Conclude with a summary and next steps
- Maintain complete and accurate minutes (avoid unnecessary information)

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Committee Meetings

Tips for productive committee meetings:

- Name tags
- Materials in advance no reports read at meetings
- Identify objectives for each agenda item
- Send reminders
- Talk to people in advance to gain consensus

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Committee Meetings

Tips for productive committee meetings (cont.):

- Heavy on discussion time allocated based on the importance of each topic
- Most important items first
- Bring in experts landscape
- Draw out people who haven't participated

Committee Meetings

Tips for productive committee meetings (cont.):

- Cater to multiple discussion styles silent starts, small group discussions
- Don't tolerate windbags
- E.L.M.O.
- Be wary of decisions too easily reached
- Send summary documenting key decisions, responsibilities and deadlines

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Committee Charters

Agreement in advance regarding:

- Purpose
- Goals an objectives
- Deliverables
- Membership
- Authority

- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Time frame
- Budget (if applicable)

QUESTIONS?

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THANK YOU

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