



PREPARATION FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Ray Burniston writes, some thoughts on preparing for Committee Meetings

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How often have we heard the statement, “my committee meetings start at 7.30 p.m. and usually manage to go on until midnight”. The same old agenda is trotted out for each meeting and as the members get tired and perhaps have had a few drinks, then decisions, if any are made, take longer and are invariable poor ones. I can remember my first ever committee meeting when the Honorary Treasurer was asked to give his report, he started by saying he had nothing to report but twenty minutes later he was still carrying on.

For the Secretary of the Club there are three points to remember in preparing for a meeting:

Preparation - Preparation - Preparation

If you get that right, the meeting will flow and, in most cases, should never extend beyond two hours and should be less.

First, try to get agreement on starting at a sensible time rather than the traditional 7.30/8.00 p.m. The best time to start a meeting, if you have to hold it in the evening, is around 6.00 p.m. Some clubs have a dinner at the club afterwards which is arranged for 8.00 p.m. which concentrates the mind on the matter. Even if you do not have a meal afterwards try to get earlier starting times as this sometimes helps those working who will often be prepared to make the effort to get there earlier delaying their evening meal until later. Some clubs hold their meetings at weekends which, providing the timing is right, will usually mean that those attending will want to play golf sometime whilst at the club.

Prepare the agenda in consultation with the Chairman and try to avoid having a set one for every meeting. At certain times of the year the meeting may be set to discuss matters such as budgets/subscriptions, final accounts etc, and make sure that detailed reports are sent out to members in advance. Always post all items for meetings. This ensures that you do not get members arriving five minutes before the meeting and opening up their envelopes.

If you have sub-committee meetings then try to arrange them so that you can circulate their minutes well in advance of your meeting. Planning the dates for all meetings well in advance makes it far easier to carry this out.

Always try to have a meeting with your chairman prior to the meeting starting. If you have a good chairman then he/she will insist on a proper briefing and this ensures that both of you are on the same wavelength.

If possible ban alcohol and ensure that you have a well ventilated room with adequate seating.

Finally if you join a club in which all committees, including sub-committees, meet every month, then try to educate your committees that by having better managed meetings they will probably be able to cut the number of meetings and time down substantially over a period of time. You need to work hard if you have that situation in your club, but it is surprising how members will change if they see things are improving.

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