



## EXAMINING THE ROLE OF COMMITTEES

Committees play a defining role in the management structure of almost all clubs, so it pays to know how they work and how to get the best out of them. Below is a reference guide to the whys and wherefores.

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This article will cover both types of clubs and committees, and will try to take the Secretary/Manager through the problems associated in dealing with a committee. While being interviewed for the job, it is important to try to find out the committee structure at the club. This will vary between clubs and you will need to spend time from your first day finding out what has gone on before and any problems that may be apparent. Reading through the minutes of previous meetings will be a useful source. Also it is good to make it your objective to talk with the chairman of all sub committees during your first few weeks. Try to do this before you get immersed in meetings. This way you get some idea of the way things have operated before and the problems that may exist.

If the club has an Honorary Treasurer you will need to go through the financial arrangements from the first few days. This person may be a useful source of information on the committee structure at the club.

As Secretary/Manager you need to establish very quickly the position you will hold at the club in relation to the committee. At some clubs the Secretary/Manager will be very much regarded as the Chief Executive and will be expected to manage the club along the guidelines set by the committee. While at another club, the Secretary/Manager will be mainly a Minute taker and have little authority or control.

Just because the club advertise for a Secretary/Manager/Manager this does not mean they want someone to manage! Although the title may be Secretary/Manager at another club, the incumbent may be given full executive control and be expected to manage. So you need to find out the position before you take up the appointment.

The question is often asked about the best size and committee structure for a club. The short answer is that what is successful in one club can be a failure in another. Much will depend on the powers the Secretary/Manager has and the quality of the membership on the committee. A good strong Chairman who cuts out the waffle and inane comment can be the difference between a successful club and one that goes from crisis to crisis.

Below are listed some of the points that the newly appointed Secretary/Manager should check on arriving at the club.

Check whether the club has a separate Chairman or if the post is held annually by the Captain. If the latter is the case then you will most likely have a new chairman each year. This will mean very little continuity and you will have to brief a new chairman each year.

- ✉ Check the number of years each member serves on the committee before either having to retire or seek re-election. If the club has a policy of each member having to be re-elected annually then you would be best to steer clear of such a set up. Occasionally in these types of circumstances, the club is mainly run by the Secretary/Manager with little input from the committee other than setting the guidelines.
- ✉ Find out what, if any, "Terms of Reference" there are for the committee and whether they are adhered to.
- ✉ How often are meetings held, and what has been the average length of time in the past. Regular meetings much over three and a half hours are not a good sign: so proceed with caution.
- ✉ What time does the committee meet and when. Starting a meeting at after 7.30 pm could mean long and fruitless meetings.
- ✉ Meetings commencing either in the afternoon or say about 6.00 pm are a good sign.
- ✉ Some clubs hold the meetings on either a Saturday or Sunday often in the morning. This can be a good sign as members will probably be keen to get out on the golf course or home for lunch which keeps the meetings short and business like.
- ✉ A meeting starting at say 6.00 pm followed each time by a dinner at 8.00 pm is also a good sign.
- ✉ See what type of Agenda has been the norm in the past and find out what preparation is done in the way of circulating reports in advance. All this can point to a well run and successful club.

Initially you will need to follow the current way the main committee and sub-committees meet. Changes may well be introduced at a later stage but you need to get the feel of things before you make recommendations for changes.

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