

## CHAPTER 1

### TEN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR MEETINGS

To make a meeting successful, you need an affirmative vision of success and a set of performance indicators with which to measure it.

This chapter describes ten performance indicators for meetings. Use them to assess your Board and membership meetings. You can rate your meetings on a scale of 0 to 10 using each of these indicators (0 means “as bad as it can get,” and 10 means “it couldn’t be any better”), and then add up your numbers. The total will be between 0 and 100. Ask your Board members to do the same and compare notes. Celebrate areas that work and take corrective action in the areas that need attention. Repeat this evaluation at least every six months to sustain and measure progress.

Based on your total score, you could rate your governing Board or Council as follows:

- 0 to 50: Dysfunctional
- 51 to 70: Functional
- 71 to 90: Effective
- 91 to 100: Excellent

Next are the ten performance indicators for meetings.

#### **CLARITY**

In a good meeting, the mandate of the group is clear and prominent, with all efforts directed to advancing it. Second, the purpose of the meeting is clearly defined: What benefits (“return on investment”) will the meeting yield? Third, the issues are clear: What questions must be answered and what decisions need to be made? Do the members always know precisely what they are debating or voting on? Finally, the procedure: Do the members understand basic rules of order and how they should be used to facilitate collective progress while protecting basic rights?

#### **ORDER AND DECORUM**

In a well-run meeting, only one member speaks at a time (after being recognized to speak, and not by being the first off the mark to raise his or her voice). Members speak without being interrupted (as long as they stay on track and observe time limits). They remain courteous, use appropriate language, and direct their comments to the issues while avoiding the personalities (“hard on the issues, but soft on the people”).

## **PRODUCTIVITY**

A good meeting moves forward at an appropriate pace, allowing the members to make timely progress along a pre-defined agenda. Time is allocated to issues in accordance with their significance and the projected benefit of their discussion (*Time is money, and is invested with care*). If a meeting is productive, members leave with a sense of accomplishment and with renewed enthusiasm and commitment to the organization they are mandated to serve.

## **FLEXIBILITY AND CREATIVE THINKING**

In a good meeting, formal meeting structures (agendas, time limits, rules of order) are used to facilitate progress and do not stifle or impede creative thinking. When circumstances require it, formal structures are relaxed. The level of formality is customized to the needs of the group (less rules and less structure for the smaller and more harmonious groups; more for larger and more adversarial groups). Members are encouraged to be creative and to question conventional wisdom.

## **QUALITY DECISIONS**

The group's decisions are wise and responsible, and reflect due diligence. Members consider a broad spectrum of issues and take into account the impact of their decisions on internal and external parties. Prior to a meeting, members upgrade their knowledge and review all relevant documents. Solutions are discussed only when problems are understood. They address real problems, not surface issues or "symptoms," and are bound to withstand long-term scrutiny.

## **OPENNESS AND COLLABORATION**

Members come to meetings with open minds, ready to listen to others before forming an opinion. There are no hidden agendas and no pre-determined outcomes. Adversity ("you against me") is replaced by collaboration ("you and me against the problem"). The tendency to instinctively dismiss and trivialize ideas is avoided, and the benefit of the doubt is given to everyone's input.

## **BALANCE**

Every member has the same opportunity to speak and influence the decision making process. Dominated discussions (90% of the time consumed by 10% of the people) are discouraged. "The tyranny of the minority" (outspoken members dictating the outcomes) is avoided, and true democracy (shared decision making) prevails.

## **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

Every member contributes to the success of the meeting, avoids finger pointing, and does not automatically defer to the Chair or to experienced members. Individual members feel free to question whether an agenda item is related to the group's mandate, express concern about dominated discussions, and share creative ideas, even if outspoken members might dismiss them.

## **VARIETY**

Meetings are varied, engaging, interesting and fun. Predictability and monotony (the greatest enemies of creative thinking) are avoided.

## **LOGISTICAL SUPPORT**

Everything is there exactly when and where you need it. The room setup is just right. The room temperature is comfortable. The ventilation and the lighting work properly. The room is quiet and distraction-free. The audio-visual aids function like clockwork. The refreshments and meals are tasty, healthy, sufficient, and are served unobtrusively and at the right time.

## **CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS**

- To have a good meeting, you must first have an affirmative vision of what it looks, sounds and feels like.
- Use the ten performance indicators to create the appropriate balance between efficiency and principled, inclusive debates.
- Take the ten performance indicators a step further by involving your colleagues in an honest evaluation of your meetings. Do this evaluation now, and compare notes. Congratulate your members on areas that work, and take measures to reinforce areas that don't work.
- Repeat this collective evaluation periodically to make continuous improvement. There are always things to celebrate and areas to improve upon.