

How to Run a Business Meeting

**Masters' & Wardens' Education Day
January 26, 2019**

R.:W.: Michael S Neuberger, PGH

Step 1: Don't Make Meetings a Bore

- No brother ever comes to Lodge excited for a business meeting.
- Bills, Building Maintenance Repairs, Announcements (already read in the trestleboard or Facebook) – BORING!
- No one enjoys listening to the Worshipful Master and Secretary prattle on endlessly back and forth like a Wimbledon tennis match.
- Business meetings are necessary to run a well-controlled Lodge, but the business of a Lodge should be to put on quality programming. **A well run business meeting should last no more than 20 minutes.**

Step 2: Extend Greetings from the East

- Brethren have worked hard during their masonic careers, devoting much time, love, and labor to the Craft.
- Brethren who have earned titles of Worshipful Brother, Right Worshipful, and Distinguished White Apron, should be acknowledged by the Worshipful Master from the East, as proper respect to these brethren, so are sitting Worshipful Masters visiting from other Lodges. Guests, should also be acknowledged, and made welcome.
- However, nothing can ruin the mood more than a Worshipful Master who forgets to mention a brother or messes up their name or title. The Tyler (or Senior Deacon), prior to Lodge, should have written down for the Worshipful Master the name and rank of every visitor and distinguished brother. The time to take attendance is not while giving the greeting.

Step 3: Set a Proper Agenda

- The Secretary should prepare an agenda with the Worshipful Master and share it with the Treasurer, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden.
- No Surprises.
- A typical agenda includes (i) Reading of the Minutes (ii) Treasurer's Report (iii) Bills (iv) Communications (v) Petitions (vi) Committee Reports (vii) Balloting (viii) Old Business (ix) New Business (x) Sickness and Distress.
- A business meeting is not ritual. If only 4 of the above 10 items are required to be addressed, then only address the 4 items required.

Step 4: Secretaries are to avoid VERBOSITY

- The old commercial used to say, “When E. F. Hutton speaks, everyone listens.” Well the last time Grand Lodge membership rolls were checked, E. F. Hutton was not the Secretary of any Lodge.
- The reading of minutes is time filler for Lodge’s that have no programs.
- Minutes can be disseminated to the brethren via email before the meeting and copies provided in Lodge.
- Paraphrasing the minutes while preserving the accuracy and content is acceptable. The goal is to provide an overview, there is no reason to read the minutes verbatim.

Step 5: Treasurer's Report

- Every brother has the right to inspect the Treasurer's books, but few do.
- In Lodge, the Treasurer should report the opening balance, total receipts and disbursements for the period, and closing balance.
- No need to re-read bills paid, that were announced at the prior meeting when they were first approved.

Step 6: Reading of the Bills

- This is one of the most critical functions performed at the business meeting.
- The brethren have the right to know how the Lodge is spending their money.
- Each bill should be read and explained. Credit cards should have each charge explicitly announced. The brethren should be given an opportunity to question any of the invoices.

Step 7: A Word about Motions

- Much like a well-run Vegas magician act, having a shill in the audience is always helpful.
- The Senior Warden should know in advance that he is expected to make the necessary motions during the meeting, with the Junior Warden seconding those motions, to accept the Secretary's minutes, Treasurer's report, to pay the bills subject to audit, and any other motions the Worshipful Master wants raised during the meeting.

Step 8: Back to VERBOSITY

- Other than a Grand Lodge communication which should be read in its entirety, unless the Secretary has a mellifluously sounding voice, there really is no need for the Secretary to read verbatim every communication he receives.
- He should read them before Lodge, so that during the business meeting he can **paraphrase** in a few sentences the gist of any communication. Any brother wishing additional information can visit the Secretary after Lodge.
- Summer Announcements in September

Step 9: Committees

- As a matter of good corporate governance, different committees throughout the year should present to the brethren the results of what they have been diligently working on for the benefit of the Craft.
- Similar to the Secretary's minutes and Treasurer's report, a copy of the Committee Report should be sent out to the brethren in advance or shortly after the meeting, and the Committee provide a brief summary during Lodge, as well as being prepared to answer any questions.

Step 10: Balloting is Ritual

- This is probably the one aspect of the business meeting that actually is Ritual.
- The Worshipful Master should remind the brethren, that there should be no talking during the balloting. This is not a tyled refreshment.
- Brethren should silently line up, vote, and sit back down. The same way a brother acts during any of the three degrees is how they should act during balloting.
- No reason for balloting to drag. Have your shills ready to make motions (collective balloting).

Step 11: Old, New & Other

- Open discussions around Old, New, or Other business is a forum for the brethren to discuss any open issues.
- While the Worshipful Master is opening the Lodge up for anyone to opine, he should nevertheless have an idea beforehand as to what will be discussed, so there are not any surprises.
- Know the power of your gavel and never lose control over the meeting.

Step 12: Programs

- A business meeting is not a program. If all you do is Business Meetings and Degrees, your Lodge will die.
- It is the responsibility of the Worshipful Master to ensure that the brethren receive Masonic Light.
- As part of your installation oath as Worshipful Master, you swore “I will not open or close the Lodge without giving the whole or a suitable part of the lecture appropriate thereto, or causing the same to be done”.
- It is the Worshipful Master’s obligation to share that light.

Step 12: Programs

- Programs may include Degree Work, a Table Lodge, a Lecture, a Presentation, or any other enlightening experience you think the brethren will enjoy.
- One suggestion to offer here is seeking out the assistance of well-informed brethren to speak at your Lodge (or members of appendant bodies).
- Reach out to your District Deputy Grand Master and see if you can book anyone from the elected line to come speak at your Lodge.
- A program should be educational, memorable, and something worth brethren spending their valuable time away from home to attend.

Step 12: Programs

- On the Grand Lodge Website is a Speakers Bureau
- It has over 30 brethren (names and contact info) who are prepared to deliver over 140 different lectures and presentations.
- There is never a reason to have a Lodge meeting without masonic light.

Step 13: Fellowship

- A successful and memorable Lodge night will rest primarily on three pillars.
- First, a well-oiled smooth running business meeting that deals directly with the issues required for a Lodge to deal with the administrative and financial needs of the Lodge.
- Second, provide an enlightening experience that feeds and nourishes the souls of the brethren with that heavenly manna of Masonic Light.
- Third, provide an evening of brotherly love and fellowship. Have a plan for something after Lodge, whether that be dessert, a light libation, a cigar, or anything that keeps the brethren gathered around the hearth of the Lodge continuing the discussion that spills over from the evening's program.

Conclusion

- The Lodge experience should be the highlight of every brother's week. It is something that they should look forward to with anticipation.
- And as the saying goes, "always leave them wanting more".