

Tool 4



Helping Committees Work as Effective Teams

Most of the work of the church is done by committees. Can your group or committee become more effective? Here are some tools to help.

1. Keep the atmosphere informal. This helps people remain involved and interested.
2. Keep focused. Identify and revisit the goals of the meeting from time to time. Make sure the goals are clear, focused and accepted by everyone present.
3. Give every idea a hearing.
4. Test out ideas and work toward consensus. If everyone is not listening or if an idea is not clear, paraphrase and ask if everyone understands the meaning of what is being said.
5. Don't evade disagreement. Identify it. Brainstorm ideas to come up with creative solutions and alternatives.
6. Whenever possible, try to come to a decision by consensus; i.e., when members of the group or committee are willing to support the decision. Consensus does not mean that everyone completely agrees with the decision or that people must change their minds for the decision to work. Instead, it is a decision that everyone can live with. (See Tool 3 "Reaching Consensus" for more information.)
7. Provide feedback. There is no place for personal attacks or innuendo. The goal of constructive feedback is to remove an obstacle that blocks the team from getting the job done.
8. Team members should be comfortable to express their feelings as well as their ideas on both the problem at hand and on the group process. Everyone should be aware of how others feel about the matter under discussion.
9. Good decisions are followed by clear action plans. Each person present leaves the meeting knowing what s/he is supposed to do and has established a timeline for completing that task.
10. The leader/facilitator of the group does not dominate the discussion. Members do not defer to him or her. The leadership of the group may shift periodically, depending on circumstances. There should be no evidence of a struggle for power.

Any questions or comments? Please contact the Elders' Institute for information.

Written by Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare
Copyright © Elders' Institute 2004