



ADVISING
COMMUNITIES

Business Meetings Best Practices

Congratulations! Running a business meeting during the annual conference for one of the NACADA Advising Communities is such a wonderful privilege and opportunity to connect with colleagues from around the world. Here are some best practices:

- **Be prepared.** Meetings are work, so, just as in any other work activity, the better prepared you are for them, the better the results you can expect.
- **Have an agenda.** An agenda — a list of the topics to be covered during the course of a meeting — can play a critical role in the success of any meeting. It shows participants where they are going, but it's then up to the participants to figure out how to get there. Be sure to distribute the agenda and any prework in advance. By distributing the agenda and prework before the meeting, participants can prepare for the meeting ahead of time. As a result, they will be immediately engaged in the business of the meeting, and they'll waste far less time throughout the meeting. See page 2 for a sample agenda.
- **Start on time and end on time.** Make sure to start right on time and keep to the scheduled meeting time. If you announce the length of the meeting and then stick to it, fewer participants will keep looking at their watches, and more participants will take an active role in your meetings.
- **Include, rather than exclude.** Meetings are only as good as the ideas that the participants bring forward. Great ideas can come from anyone in an organization, not just its managers. Roy Disney, vice chairman of the Walt Disney Company, tells a great story that illustrates this point perfectly. Says Disney, "There's an old story about Walt from the early days when we were making short subjects — really just a collection of gags. Every week, Walt had a gag contest, and everybody was free to enter — the winner got \$5, which was a lot of money during the Depression. And who kept winning, week after week? The janitor. You see, it's not about who's the boss. It's about who's got the best ideas."
- **Maintain the focus.** Meetings can easily get off track and stay off track. The result? Meetings do not achieve their goals. Meeting leaders and participants must actively work to keep meetings focused on the agenda items. Topics should not include inside jokes or conversations that might exclude new members of the advising community.
- **Capture and assign action items.** Unless they are held purely to communicate information, or for other special purposes, most meetings result in action items, tasks, and other assignments for one or more participants. Be sure that someone has agreed to take on the job of record

AC Division Best Practice Developed By
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keeping. Immediately after the meeting, summarize the outcome of the meeting, as well as assignments and timelines, and e-mail a copy of this summary to all attendees.

- **Get feedback.** Every meeting has room for improvement. Be sure to solicit feedback from meeting attendees on how the meeting went right for them — and how it went wrong. Was the meeting too long? Did one person dominate the discussion? Were attendees unprepared? Were the items on the agenda unclear? Whatever the problems, you can't fix them if you don't know about them. You can use a simple form to solicit feedback, or you can simply informally speak with attendees after the meeting to get their input.

Sample Business Meeting Agenda

Introductions and Attendance

- It is important to realize that for some individuals this is the first annual conference. Depending on the size of the room, make sure to do introductions in either a large group or by table. Make sure to have a signup sheet with the list of potential ways to get involved in the community.

Additional items to include might be:

- Review of last year's minutes/Old business
- Announcements/Correspondence/Kudos
- Executive Board/Committee Reports
- New Business
- Responsibility Sign-Up
- Comments, Questions, Concerns
- Time to Socialize

Is there enough material to provide a one-page handout? This would include last year's minutes, committee reports, and potential new business. Don't be afraid to add spice to your meetings! Have a guest speaker! Also, conduct fun, new icebreakers at the beginning of meetings for those that might be new and reacquaint those that are repeat attendees.

Most members of the Advising Communities would say that the time to socialize and/or talk about hot topics is extremely important. There should be enough time built into the meeting to allow for good dialogue.

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