



How to Run an Effective Meeting

/by Bode Buckley/

Part I: Before the Meeting

A STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT MEETING'S SUCCESS CAN DEPEND ON YOUR PREPARATION. BODE BUCKLEY GIVES SOME HELPFUL TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER.

The key to running a successful meeting is preparation. Because most ASTM committees only meet face to face twice a year, it is especially important to make the most of the short time together. The best way to accomplish this is for both the chairman and the attendees to come to the meeting well prepared. There are a few simple steps that the chairman can take to ensure this preparation.

STEP 1: CONTACT THE NEGATIVE VOTERS

To expedite the resolution of negatives, all negative voters and commenters should be contacted as the negatives and comments are received. This one-on-one communication provides the opportunity to establish a common ground, which may result in the negative's withdrawal. The communication may also provide a better understanding

of what changes would be required in order to satisfy the concerns of the negative voter.

Chairmen should confirm that they have received all of the negatives and comments from ASTM by checking the ballot closing report. This information is sent to both the subcommittee chairman and technical contacts along with copies of the negatives and comments.

Chairmen should anticipate the

(CONTINUED AFTER THE BALLOT)

ToolBox

Step 1: Contact Negative Voters

Step 2: Follow Up with Everyone Who Had a Job to Do

Step 3: Prepare an “Information-Full” Agenda

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procedures they will follow to resolve the negatives. If the chairman is unsure about the policies and procedures that might be involved, the staff manager should be consulted.

STEP 2: FOLLOW UP WITH EVERYONE WHO HAD A JOB TO DO

Six weeks before a meeting the chairman should review the minutes from the last meeting and make a list of all of the action items from that meeting. To be sure that progress is being made on each of these items, the chairman should touch base with all of the task group chairmen with a simple phone call or an e-mail. This includes:

- ▶ Finding out where each task group stands;
- ▶ Ensuring that the task group chairman has copies of the appropriate negatives and comments; and
- ▶ Determining what action needs to be taken at the next meeting.

This follow-up may also serve as a reminder to the task group chairman to get the job done.

STEP 3: CREATE AN “INFORMATION-FULL” AGENDA FOR MAILING

The agenda prepares the meeting attendees to discuss the issues that will be resolved at a meeting. An agenda with little substance does not adequately prepare the participants. An “information full” agenda will:

- ▶ Identify the topic;
- ▶ Provide background information about the item; and
- ▶ Identify what action the committee needs to take.

An example of an “information-full” agenda is found in Figure 1. Note

clearer the information presented the better. For example, in some instances a summary of the issues contained in a negative vote may be more helpful than attaching actual copies of the negatives. This is especially true when there are sections of the negative that have already been withdrawn or when the same concern is raised in multiple negatives.

Finally, the agenda identifies a goal statement. Specifically, this is what action the committee needs to take at the meeting. This could include anything from “Determine the resolution of a negative” to “Determine if a task group is necessary to research this item.”

If a chairman is not able to attend a meeting, he or she should still prepare along these lines (as well as secure a substitute to chair the meeting). Being prepared can insure a successful meeting no matter who is present or how daunting the tasks that lie before the participants. //

Look for Part II: During the Meeting in the April SN.

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA	
<i>Committee X12 on Grilling</i>	
May 5, 2000	
Toronto	
<i>Approval of the Agenda</i>	
<i>Approval of the Fall 1999 minutes</i>	
<i>Report of Task Group 1 on Lighter Fluids – S. Henry, 10 minutes</i>	
Negatives from J. Smith and D. Doe were received on the (00-1) subcommittee ballot to revise standard X1234 practice for lighting a grill. The negatives concerned the danger of users applying lighter fluid on lit coals.	
Determine if the negatives are persuasive	
<i>Report of Task Group 2 on Food Preparation – K. Leavy, 5 minutes</i>	
Research was conducted to determine if vegetables cook better on the grill if cut vertically or horizontally.	
Determine if a revision to standard X3456 is necessary	
<i>A round robin was conducted on Test Method for Charcoal Used on Grills – R. Timms, 15 minutes</i>	
R. Timms will present a summary of the findings.	
<i>Determine if a new precision and bias statement should be added to standard X4567</i>	
<i>New Business</i>	
<i>Old Business</i>	
<i>Date and Location of the Next meeting</i>	
<i>Adjournment</i>	

that each topic is clearly identified, including who will be reporting on the item and the amount of time that will be allotted for its discussion.

The second important part of this agenda is that it gives background information for each item. Quantity of information should not be confused with quality. Particularly for items that are complex or controversial, the



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