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Score Your Meetings

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Nonprofit organizations have an abundance of meetings. Do you evaluate if they are effective and necessary?

The Longview Chamber of Commerce believes in continuous improvement. Recently it applied a concept from the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to enhance meetings.

EOS is applicable to every nonprofit organization looking to make improvements. The system identifies six components in an organization: vision-mission, performance data, processes, people, issues, and traction or strategy.

The books “What the Heck is EOS” and “Traction, Get a Grip on Your Business,” describe the system.

As a result of implementing the system, all our meetings have improved.

EOS describes staff meetings as L-10 meetings. A level 10 meeting is a regular check-in with the team, where attendees develop a strategy that they can hold themselves and their team accountable.

The leadership team meets weekly, as do the employees with their direct reports. Meetings are 1.5 hours maximum. Each meeting covers very specific information that drives clarity, accountability, and cascading messages.

At the end of each meeting, staff is asked to give the occasion a score in order to hold ourselves accountable for clarity, outcomes, and effectiveness. We adopted a scale of one to five, with the best being a five.

If the score is below a 5, we ask “why?” and what should change for the next meeting? The outcome has been intentional agendas, better focus, and more strategic discussions.

Board Meeting Ratings

It worked for staff meetings, so we tried it to score executive committee meetings.

The officers set their goals for the year. They are accountable to each other. They regularly discuss progress, the challenges they have or are facing in achieving the goals, and the necessary strategies.

While this drives engagement, we had never had a system to evaluate board and committee meetings. Now we do!

They score on the following questions or scale:

- Was the meeting good use of your time? What would make it better?
- Was everyone heard and engaged? Did we listen to each other?
- Did we address each other directly and respectfully?
- Did we get to the root cause and solve the real issues?
- Did we achieve what was listed on the agenda?

The board indicates they appreciate the opportunity to score and improve their meetings.

Any ratings below a five, we discuss how to improve the next meeting. We agree that the directors share in the responsibility for improving and designing the best board meetings.

Format

To encourage and remember the scoring system, add the scale to the bottom of the

Unfinished Business						
Meeting Rating (circle a number; 5 being best)	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5		
Adjournment						
<div>MISSION STATEMENT <small>(example)</small> “.....to advance and protect through education, advocacy and public awareness...”</div>						

agenda. Very simple, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 stretched across the footer.

As the meeting prepares to end, the chair or anybody can say, “let’s rate the effectiveness of this meeting.” Directors circle their score.

As a group, or among individuals, they are invited to share suggestions to improve meeting design, impact, and outcomes. You are likely to hear comments about agenda format, wasting time, meeting room environment, or access to supporting documents.

This process promotes continuous improvement of governance and outcomes in our chamber.

David Aaker, also an instructor at the Institute for Organization Management offers, "Meetings should be evaluated, and reminds us success includes a focus on solutions, respect for differing opinions, and voting on what is best for the organization and mission."

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and tools at www.nonprofitcenter.com. Kelly Hall is president and CEO of the Longview Chamber of Commerce, which also manages the Convention and Visitors Bureau, 100 Acres of Heritage Main Street, and Keep Longview Beautiful.

