

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Community and Faith-Based Organizing and Development Resources

www.gatherthepeople.org

GTP ORGANIZER TRAINING

Training Guide #11

Grassroots Organization Meetings

GENERAL

1. Purposes:
 - Action on an issue (taste of battle)
 - Activity on a project (community-building and sense of accomplishment)
 - Internal maintenance (necessary business)
2. Provide opportunities for fun
3. Demand visible commitment
4. Convey importance of the organization's purpose
5. Meet people's needs
6. Confirm formal agreement on informal understandings

MOTIVES FOR ATTENDANCE

1. Organizations:
 - Access to others (individuals)
 - Build reputation via member status
 - Claim credit if organization succeeds
 - Broaden organizational base
2. Individuals:
 - Excitement of social contact
 - Protect interests
 - Chance for leadership or other special role
 - Obstruct action contrary to self-interest
 - Opportunity for esteem, status, belonging
 - Route to express ideological conviction
 - Means to gain direct benefits
 - Way to keep informed
3. Cautions:
 - Leave losers out; don't try to get everyone with the thought of "saving" or "converting" them
 - Ensure range of roles so all can make contributions, receive benefits, and earn esteem
 - Make it business-like but fun
 - Rotate special opportunities

PRE-MEETING BRIEFINGS

1. Member accountability to leaders instead of staff:
 - Create leadership structure of regular, monthly meetings for agenda planning and evaluation
 - Include informal leaders
 - Foster a leadership culture
2. General points to cover in all briefings:

- Political and organizational context of upcoming meeting or action
- Expectations regarding players, resources, and specific objectives
- Sequence and linkage of meeting or agenda development and place or part of each player
- Problems requiring informal leadership and who will play those parts
- Connection of meeting or action to prior and future organizational activities in ongoing process or campaign
- Broad hoped-for outcomes

AGENDA

1. Written:
 - Begin with approval of agenda
 - Limited (3-5 substantive items maximum)
 - Schedule open discussion at end
 - Show estimated time for each item
2. Assign roles ahead of time:
 - Reports
 - Calls for volunteers for actions, motions and nominations, and projects
 - Limit time (90 minutes maximum)

CHAIR

1. Have one
2. Prep for responsibilities:
 - Parliamentary procedure
 - Intro new people to old
 - Quick updates (30 seconds) on old and new business
 - Probable reactions of others to agenda items
 - Handling “problem people”
 - Ensure everyone speaks but not endlessly
 - Turn criticisms and problems back to others

PHYSICAL LAYOUT

1. Maximize eye contact
2. Ensure comfortable atmosphere:
 - Lighting
 - Temperature
 - Seating
 - Sound system
 - Rest rooms
 - Refreshments

BEFORE ADJOURNING

1. Circulate sign-in sheet
2. Allow time for expression of all opinions and ideas
3. Clarify timetables
4. Restate commitments for follow-up action
5. Summing up by chairperson of accomplishments and tasks to be done
6. Announce post-meeting refreshments and socializing

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