

AUC Ministerial Association Group Discussion Guide



Leading Effective Meetings

The Church Board

- The culture of your church will come to mirror your meetings. Mediocre, passionless meetings bring with them a mediocre passionless organization.
- **Do you agree with the above statement why/why not?**
- **Share the most amusing moment you've had in a board meeting?**
- **Have you ever been part of a particularly dysfunctional board? What factors led to the dysfunction and if you worked through them how did you go about the process?**
- **What's your best experience of working with a church board? What factors shaped this to be a positive environment?**
- **Are the meetings you lead productive, compelling and energizing?**
- **Do you look forward to your board meeting?**
- **If a young pastor asked you your top three tips for leading effective board meetings, what would they be?**

"If we hate meetings, can we be making good decisions and successfully leading our organizations? I don't think so. There is simply no substitute for a good meeting – a dynamic, passionate and focused engagement – when it comes to extracting the collective wisdom of a team. The hard truth is, bad meetings almost always lead to bad decisions, which is the best recipe for mediocrity." Patrick Lencioni
Death by Meeting

Most meetings are lethargic, unfocused and passionless. However it should not be this way.

When properly utilized meetings are actually time savers.

Leading Effective Meetings

Prepare Well

- What orientation can you give a board member when the first join the board so that they get started on the right foot and understand what the board is trying to achieve?
- Be very intentional in how you shape the agenda. Ensure priority is given to governance issues if you are in a board that is both governance and management.
- Ensure Agenda items are ready to be presented with expectations of what decisions are being made.
- Clarify what needs to be dealt with at what level of meeting. e.g. should an issue actually be dealt with by that ministry department/leader rather than the whole board and just reported on.
- Have real data about the problems everyone knows exist.
- Encourage leaders to report well with concise information that is pertinent to the whole board. Reports need to be prepared as opposed to on the spot ramblings. Issues that might arise out of the report need to be thought through and if discussion is needed should be on the agenda. Some churches use a reporting template.
- Send agenda out early with necessary background readings and points of pre meeting prayer.
- Use assessment tools or discussion aids to help clarify what issues are. Using a tool separate to your ideas can make it easier to generate discussion and be a reflection of the wider meeting rather than one person's opinion.

E.g. Quick life-cycle assessment.

Purposes of church assessment

Change readiness questionnaire

Make Space for Board Members to Engage in Community

- Structure board meetings around a meal from time to time
- Make time to share with and pray for each other. Task oriented people will not like this however may see it differently if they know 'community' is the task at this point.

Your Devotional Time is Crucial

Remind people of the mission and why they are doing what they do. This is not a time to manipulate toward a decision but rather sincerely connect with God's heart for His church.

Ideas:

- Pray for new people in the congregation
- Perhaps you can pray in various places around the church building
- Perhaps you can shift where you hold your board meetings to promote creativity – people can become set in the same environment.
- Use stories to illustrate what the vision and mission look like
- How does the Holy Spirit fit into group decision making? What place does prayer play throughout the meeting?

Clarify What Is Expected

- Clarify are people meant to be debating, voting, brainstorming, weighing in or just listening. Some want informative and quick. Others think it should be interactive and strategic. Others would like to step back, take a breath and talk meaningfully about culture. Others want to make clear decisions and move on. All are right and so need to know what is expected on a given issue.

Conflict is Your Friend

- Most leaders of meetings seem focused on avoiding tension
- Leaders must look for legitimate reasons to provoke, and uncover relevant, constructive ideological conflict. By doing so they'll keep people engaged, which leads to more passionate discussions and ultimately to better decisions.
- The truth is, the only thing more painful than confronting an uncomfortable topic is pretending it doesn't exist. And I believe

far more suffering is caused by failing to deal with an issue directly – and whispering about it in the hallways – than by putting it on the table and wrestling with it head on.

- Once the decision is made, everyone supports it. That's why it is critical that no one hold anything back during the discussion.

Retreats

A regular leadership retreat can be a great time for building community and engaging issues of church life at a deeper level.

- What exercises and resources will help people engage?
- What exercises resources will help people grow in understanding church life?

(Brendan at the conference office has a range of resources that are valuable for generating the right conversations in a retreat context)

Board Training:

How do you train your board in church health thinking?

- Articles and books
- DVD segments with discussion questions
- Worksheets
- Activities
- Guest

Topics for Training might include:

- Life-Cycles
- Discipleship
- Purposes of the Church
- Self-Leadership
- Change Management
- Vision

Books:

Patrick Lencioni – *Death by Meeting*, Jossey-Bass, 2004

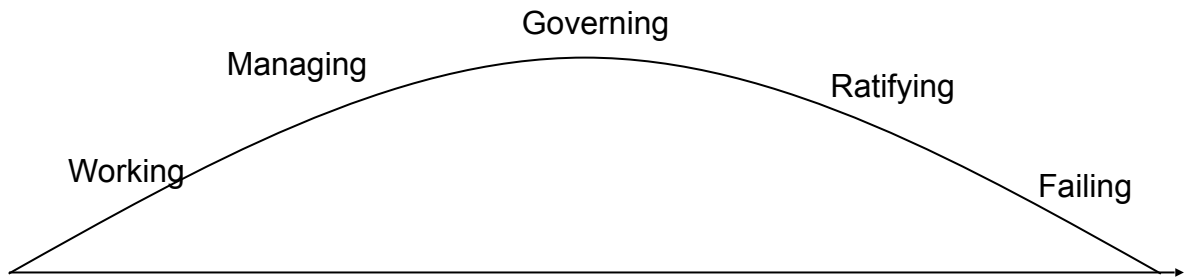
Mack Tennyson - *Making Committees Work*, Ministerial Association

Michael Anthony – *The Effective Church Board*, Baker Books, 1993.

Board Life-Cycles

- Governance will rarely be achieved by a board structured for management. We do need both functions in a church. How might you ensure both functions are happening in your context?
- Is your meeting a small group designed for decisions or a large group designed for information sharing? There is a place for both types of meetings however when we mix these meetings up we get frustration.

Board Life-Cycles



| Working Board | Managing Board | Governing Board | Ratifying Board | Failing Board |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| No Pastor, perhaps no acting elder/ lay leader | Weak or immature pastor, needs help running organization | Competent pastor, experienced staff that knows more than the board about the work | Hire a good pastor and stay out of his way | Members resign, high turnover, organizational fragmentation |
| New start-up or small organization | Emergency situations or changing pastors | Clear division of duties | Board approves what the pastor brings | Financial mess, consumed by cash-flow pressures |
| Board essentially doing the work of the pastor as a team | Board knows a lot about the work, assigns tasks to the pastor | Focus is on board work, concerned with values | Organization OK, but board in decline | Relational strife, distrust between and among staff and board |
| Board heavily involved in the work | Board is hands-on and proud of it | Up-to-date principles in writing | Focus on stability, status quo | Looking to the past, way behind the staff |
| Focus on day-to-day operations | Focus on administration and operation | Future-oriented, operates on strategic level | Hands off, getting lazy, out of touch, unaware | Not strategic, crippled by fire-fighting |
| Immediate time horizon | Intermediate time horizon | Hands on / hands off, delegates to pastor | Stale policies, little accountability, no term limits, reunion of old friends | Confused, aren't sure what to do |
| Primary role of board is recruiting volunteers and raising funds | Primary role of board is making decisions | Primary role of board is defining principles, holding pastor accountable for outcomes and planning for the future | Primary role of board is rubber stamping pastor's initiatives | Primary role of board is ensuring survival |

Adapted by Karen Cress ©James C Galvin & Associates, Inc.

The Work of the Board

The work of the Board is best done in a relational, prayerful and sharing atmosphere.

The role of the board is to:

- Clarify, pray for and embody the Mission of the local church and ensure it is attained
- Planning evangelism in all of its phases and coordinating the various outreach initiatives of the various ministries
- Encouraging and helping the Personal Ministries team to enlist members into service.
- Keep sharp in regard to issues of healthy church leadership
- Protect against harmful influences
- Evaluate and put in place future directions for the church
- Serve the church through effective governance (putting in place guiding principles and policies)
- Accountable oversight of the church membership and financial assets.
- Understanding community needs and constantly assessing how the church can be part of meeting those needs

Appropriate Spiritual Gifts

The Church Board needs the blessing of certain spiritual gifts: leadership, knowledge, wisdom and faith. Most of these will be found in the leaders who are members of the Board.

The gift of leadership (Rom. 12:8) is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate those goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish these goals for the glory of God. This gift is central to the task of the Church Board.

The gift of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8) is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to discover, accumulate, analyse and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the body. Information is the bed-rock on which plans are constructed. If your congregation does not have someone with this gift, the Church Board can request a consultant from

the conference.

The gift of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8) is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed." (Prov. 15:22) When you sit down together in a planning session, listen carefully to one another and bathe your planning in prayer. God promises to be present through His Spirit and guide your decisions.

The gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:9) is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for the future of His work.

Self-Leadership

Board members need to be clearly trained on what it means to be part of the board and the need for self-leadership especially in regard to the character they bring to a board meeting.

Who are you bringing to the board?

- Do you have a heart for God?
- Do you have a heart for God's mission of reaching lost people?
- Do you embody the vision of your church?
- Do you live out the 'one-another's of scripture in your board meeting?
- Is your pride subdued?
- Have you prayed through your contribution on the board?
- Have you sought God's wisdom?
- Are your motives pure?

Church Life is a Team Sport

“The leadership of a church, like the bone structure of a natural body, needs to be healthy and properly aligned in order for the body to work as it should. Teamwork in the leadership promotes teamwork in the body.” Michael Fletcher, *Leadership Transitions*, Wagner Publications

Ideas for Good Team Meetings

- **Get to know your team**
Their aspirations, story, perspectives.
Spend time in environments outside the meeting context.
- **Forge a Clear, Common Goal,**
Be concise – if the team can't see it the team can't do it.
- **Clarify Member Skills and Responsibilities**
Teach team skills
- **Avoid Predictable Problems**
Long, drawn out discussions
The Dominators (going around the table, asking for input)
- **Learn To Imagine again**
Generating a volume of thoughts gets people talking about options.
Once expressed, ideas can be refined.
Avoid criticism of ideas as they are being formed. Focus instead on how ideas can be improved or used.
- **Have Fun**
Collaboration on a team and creative ideas engenders laughter, jokes and high spirits. Let it flow.
- **Ensure Participation**
What really makes team meetings work is inclusion and contribution.
The more team members speak up at the meetings and offer their opinions, the higher the quality of decisions made.
- **Use Disagreement**
Recognise that disagreement is expected
Put the emotion away and listen. Once conflict becomes emotional, resolution becomes more difficult. Make it a team rule to handle conflict without the heat.
When you see a conflict, label it and open it for working through
Ask probing questions

Team players have to become comfortable with conflict. Oddly enough, if teams are working well, conflict will be part of many discussions. The trick is to view conflict as a by-product of having diverse thoughts around the table. The trap is to see conflict through an emotional lens.

- **Ask Lots of 'What if' Questions**
- **Trust Each Other**

Show an interest in others

- **Reward The Team**
What 'reward language' do people on the team speak?
- **Run Good Team Meetings**
Clear goal for the meeting
Sense of accomplishment or progress
Avoid aimless discussion

From Michael Maginn, *Making Teams Work*.

Teamwork Requires A Secure Leader

A Secure Leader

Encourages others' attempts
Points out others' strong points
Overlooks flaws
Readily admits own mistakes
Gives away credit to others
Rejoices when others succeed
Is excited when others do it better
Is willing to risk to improve
Is content to remain anonymous
Is quick to build teams

An Insecure Leader

Sabotages others' efforts
Brings attention to others' faults
Uses flaws as ammunition
Is defensive and justifies mistakes
Demands or manipulates credit
Is jealous of others' successes
Is easily intimidated
Plays it safe to retain position
Requires others to notice
Wants to do things himself

Wayne Cordeiro – *Doing Church As A Team*, Regal 112

Being a Team Member

From John Maxwell, *The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player*, Nelson

Adaptable
Collaborative
Committed
Communicative
Competent
Dependable
Disciplined
Enlarging
Enthusiastic
Intentional
Mission Conscious
Prepared
Relational
Self-Improving
Selfless
Solution Oriented
Tenacious

Go to QualitiesOfATeamPlayer.com

A Board Member's Approach to the Job

One of the reasons a board member's job is so difficult is that "the job" is essentially a group responsibility. In fact, it is hard to discuss how an individual is to approach a group task. Yet each board member has a responsibility to come with an effective mind set, to carry out his or her part of preparation and participation, and to take responsibility for the group. These are not always easy tasks.

Some advice follows on the frame of mind and individual preparations necessary for a given board member to play an effective role in creating a productive board.

1. *Be prepared to participate responsibly.* Participating responsibly means to do your homework, come prepared to work (sometimes the work is to listen), agree and disagree as your values dictate, and accept the group decision as legitimate even if not—in your opinion—correct. It is not acceptable, for example, to have opinions but not express them.
3. *Represent the congregation overall, not a single constituency.* You will understand and personally identify with one or more constituencies more than others however ensure this does not cloud your perspective of what steps the church needs to take overall.
4. *Be responsible for group behavior and productivity.* While doing your own job as a single board member is important, it does not complete your responsibility. If you are part of a group that doesn't get its job done, that meddles in administration, or that breaks its own rules, you are culpable.
5. *Be a proactive board member.* You are not a board member to hear reports. You are a board member to make governance decisions. Even when you are receiving education, do so as an active participant, searching doggedly for the wisdom that will enable good board decisions.
6. *Honour divergent opinions without being intimidated by them.* You are obligated to register your honest opinion on issues the board takes up, but other board members are obligated to speak up as well. Encourage your colleagues to express their opinions without allowing your own to be submerged by louder or more insistent comrades. You are of little use to the process if full expression of your ideas can be held hostage by a louder member.

7. *Use your special expertise to inform your colleagues' wisdom.* If you work in accounting, law, construction, or another skilled field, be careful not to take your colleagues off the hook with respect to board decisions about such matters. To illustrate, an accountant board member shouldn't assume personal responsibility for assuring fiscal soundness. But it is all right for him or her to help board members understand what fiscal jeopardy looks like or what indices of fiscal health to watch carefully. With that knowledge, the board can pool its human values about risk, brinkmanship, overextension, and so forth in the creation of fiscal policies. In other words, use your special understanding to inform the board's wisdom, but never to substitute for it.
8. *Think upward and outward more than downward and inward.* There will be great temptation to focus on what goes on with management and staff instead of what difference the organization should make in the larger world. The latter is a daunting task for which no one feels really qualified, yet it is the board member's job to tackle it.
9. *Tolerate issues that cannot be quickly settled.* Shorter-term, more concrete matters can give you a feeling of completion, but are likely to involve you in the wrong issues. If you must deal with such matters, resign from the board and apply for a staff position.
10. *Don't tolerate putting off the big issues forever.* The really big issues will often be too intimidating for you to reach a solution comfortably. Yet in most cases, the decision is being made anyway by default. Board inaction itself is a decision. Don't tolerate the making of big decisions by the timid action of not making them.
11. *Support the board's final choice.* No matter which way you voted, you are obligated to support the board's choice. This obligation doesn't mean you must pretend to agree with that choice; you may certainly maintain the integrity of your dissent even after the vote. What you must support is the legitimacy of the choice that you still don't agree with. For example, you will support without reservation that the Lead Pastor must follow the formal board decision, not yours.
12. *Don't mistake form for substance.* Don't confuse having a public relations committee with having good public relations. Don't confuse having financial reports with having sound finances. Don't confuse having a token constituent board member with having sufficient input. Traditional governance has often defined responsible behaviour procedurally (do this, review that, follow this set of steps) instead of substantively, so beware of the trap.

13. *Obsess about ends.* Keep the conversation about benefits, beneficiaries, and costs of the benefits alive at all times. Converse with staff, colleague board members, and the public about these matters. Ask questions, consider options, and otherwise fill most of your trustee consciousness with issues of ends.
14. *Don't expect agendas to be built on your interests.* The board's agenda is a product of careful crafting of the board's job, not a laundry list of trustee interests. Remember, too, that you are not on the board to help the staff with your special expertise, but to govern. No matter how well you can do a staff job, as a board member you are not there to do it or even to advise on it. If you wish to offer your help as an individual—apart from your trustee duties—do so, but take great care that all parties know you are not acting as a board member. The staff's using you as an adviser or helper must remain a staff prerogative rather than yours.
15. *Support the chair in board discipline.* Although the board as a whole is responsible for its own discipline, it will have charged the chair with a special role in the group's confronting its own process. Don't make the chair's job harder, rather ask what you can do to make it easier.

Adapted by Karen Cress

Prayer

May I allow You to work in and through me as I serve on the board of Your church. May I bring to the board a character that honours you and may I seek your wisdom for making decisions that impact lives.