

Effective Leadership in Meetings, Committees, and Boards

About The Author

Rose Otis was the director of the Department of General Conference Women's Ministries from 1990-1996. Rose is an international motivational speaker and author whose ministry has reached every continent of the world where Adventist women are finding new meaning in their lives through Women's Ministries. She resides in Texas where she is the wife of Pastor Harold Otis, mother of two children, and the proud grandmother of three.

INTROCUCTION (OH-1)

The past 10-20 years have brought a lot of change to our church and one of the positive changes that have come about has been the increased involvement of women in the decision-making process of our church. More and more women are being asked to serve on church boards, school boards, conference and union committees, executive committees, and even at the division and General Conference levels.

Many of the women who are being asked to serve in this capacity have had very little previous experience in conducting meetings or serving on committees and boards. At the General Conference women often ask for help in this area. They have been asked to serve on a church committee – whether at the church, conference, or union level – and have had relatively no experience in this area. Obviously, they want to do a good job. They want to be productive. They want their time to count for something. They want to understand the protocol and rules of order of a committee. Often they ask for guidelines that would give them help in this area. As a result we decided to offer a brief seminar to help women be effective in leadership, committee membership, and meeting protocol-parliamentary procedure. This is something we think every woman in the church needs to know.

If you are not serving on a committee or leading out in a meeting at this time, don't ignore the important information in this seminar. There's a growing desire to see more women actively involved in this process within our church organization. You might be asked to serve in the near future and this information will prove invaluable.

COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP

There may be occasions when you are asked to serve on a committee or board and you find that you are the only woman present. This can be intimidating.

However, there are growing numbers of women who serve on various committees and boards. Some even chair committees and advisories as well as other meetings. Hopefully, you will not be the only woman, but if you are remind yourself that you have been asked to serve because your church, conference, or union wants some input that they feel you can provide. You are providing a very important service particularly to the women in your church and to the church at large. You have been given a great opportunity to bring the feminine perspective to the decision making process of this body. With the help of the Holy Spirit and preparation on your part, your influence can be very positive.

When you consider that more than *70 percent* of our church membership is made up of women, it's only reasonable that our programs and policies are sensitive to the needs of the women in church. A woman's view is needed when decisions are being made, budgets voted, and new policies being put into action that will affect any segment of the church body.

Look at your appointment as a unique opportunity to provide a valuable role for the church that you love and serve. You can provide meaningful information that can be key to the decision-making process on the committee or board you are serving. Make your committee membership count for something, not just decorating the room with a feminine touch. Be a member with a mission!

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS (OH-2)

1. Know when your committee or board meetings are. Keep an updated record of the time and place.
2. If an agenda has been given to you prior to the meeting, review it. It will help you to focus on the important issues to be addressed.
3. Arrive at the meeting on time.
4. Listen intently during the discussion. Withhold side conversations.
5. Share your views (or the views of the department/council you are representing) as appropriate.
6. Allow other committee and board members the opportunity to speak on the issues.
7. Remember your Christian virtues, especially if the discussion involves a problem or sensitive issue.

8. Keep a prayerful attitude.
9. Participate in all voting actions.
10. Fulfill all additional assigned duties in a timely manner.
11. Give a well-rounded report on any assignments you have been given.
12. Work for the benefit of your church at all times.

Ten tips for chairing a committee or board

1. Know the Agenda
2. Know the rules
3. Be impartial
4. Be fair
5. Appoint a secretary and a time-keeper
6. Set a closing time
7. Set an agenda
8. Don't impose your views
9. Keep the process moving
10. Encourage participation by the body

BEING AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

What does it take to be a leader? Can anyone do it? Let's take a look at the profile of a successful meeting leader. Think for a minute about some of the people in your church, at work, or in your conference who are leaders. What leader stands out in your mind? As you think of different leadership styles, consider what style of leadership he or she uses. There are certain skills and traits that will help you be more successful no matter what leadership style you have. As some of these traits are listed, make a list for yourself and see if these are leadership traits that you possess. If not, work on it.

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1. ***GOOD COMMUNICATOR.*** Be able to communicate your ideas, the goals of your organization, and the direction in which the meeting needs to go. Skills such as good speaking ability, clarity of thought, relevance to the subject, and sensitivity to the concerns of others are just a few of the traits you should concentrate on.
2. ***UNBIASED.*** Be open to the ideas and suggestions of other committee members. Learn to consider the big picture before

coming to conclusions.

3. **PATIENT.** This is an important trait as a committee or board member, and especially when you are in a leadership role.
4. **FOCUSED.** To keep the meeting or group on target when the discussion begins to wander, an effective leader sometimes needs to redirect or refocus the members so that the objectives can be met.
5. **TACTFUL.** The right word said in the right way can be very advantageous to a leader.
6. **CALM UNDER PRESSURE.** To be able to be challenged, to have your idea dissected, and to remain calm in spite of it is an important trait in good leadership.
7. **SEE THE HUMOR IN A SITUATION.** Don't you just admire people who are able to laugh at themselves or at something they might have said or done by mistake? It is important in leadership to be able to laugh it off and to go on.
8. **ANALYTICAL ABILITY.** An effective leader must know how to quickly size up a situation by gleaning the most pertinent facts without wasting a lot of precious time in unnecessary discussion.

Now that you know eight important traits, go back and add the most important trait in Christian leadership: ***allowing oneself to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit.*** Dynamic Christian leaders never approach a meeting without having prayed over the agenda, asking God to give guidance and insight. They also begin their meetings with prayer and have a prayerful spirit as the meeting progresses. They want the Lord to make His will known through His Holy Spirit at all times, not only to the leader but to each member. ***To be directed by the Holy Spirit is the best and most important trait.***

I believe that if we do ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our meetings, then we can develop other necessary skills, too. We may not have all of them to the degree that we would like to possess them early in our leadership, but we can work toward that goal. We can analyze our leadership skills and see what our strengths and weaknesses are. If we are conscious of those areas where we need to grow, and we work on them, then the Lord will help us to be strong in all of the areas where it is important for us to be strong.

Obviously, we don't step into leadership with every one of these traits fully

developed. But, stop and analyze. Become aware of the areas that need strengthening. Determine how to grow in those areas. Here are a few ways to begin to develop stronger leadership traits:

- **OBSERVE OTHERS.** Watch other leaders and see what works for them.
- **READ.** There are lots of good books on leadership to guide you.

Before you know it, the things that you have observed or read about will be integrated into your own personal style of leadership.

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There are other important traits of a good leader. They aren't developed overnight and you need a commitment on your part if they are to truly help you become an effective leader.

- **SUPPORT YOUR MEMBERS.** Good leaders always support the group members and urge committee members to participate and share their ideas. They are open and eager to learn from other committee or board members. They take the opportunity to nurture a member who presents ideas or solutions. And they never interrupt, speak harshly, give criticism, or reprimand somebody in public.
- **BE A PERCEPTIVE FACILITATOR.** A good leader can be the catalyst in the meeting by asking the right questions, or by proposing ideas to the group to stimulate discussion or allow them to contemplate all the options. The leader must, however, know the most important details being presented and get a feel for the committee members' views. She will know when to initiate discussion and when to step back and allow the members to work together in appropriate discussion.
- **LEAD—DON'T CONTROL.** A good leader will not control every phase of the meeting and attempt to make the members see things from her perspective. If you are doing more than 50 percent of the talking, you are too controlling. All members have a voice to determine the final outcome of a meeting. If you have that much communication to share, put it in a written communication; a memo or bulletin would be an ideal way to share your thoughts so you don't waste your members' time or the church's money.
- **TAKE GOOD NOTES.** You must take notes on all that occurs during your meeting -- issues discussed, decisions made, and also how the participants are relating to one another. Special comments should also

be noted. These will help you recollect the position of certain individuals in future meetings. This is your personal account of the meeting—your observations—and they will assist you in the future with improving your meetings. Don't confuse these notes with the minutes of the meeting. We'll discuss this later.

- **GET ADDITIONAL TRAINING.** You can never know enough. Enroll in seminars or take college courses in leadership functions to enable yourself to be well rounded and developed in the skills God has blessed you with.

YOU CAN DO IT!

Don't ever think that you don't have anything meaningful to give as a leader. As a Christian woman you can strive to be all that you can be with God's help. The Director of the Women's Ministries Department of the General Conference never dreamed that the Lord would give her opportunities she has had in His service. He gave her opportunities to take on increased responsibilities, to widen her circle of responsibilities, and to step out into unknown areas that she never imagined. He can do the same for you!

God has blessed, and as a result wonderful things are happening in Women's Ministries all over the world. Don't ever say that you will never be a leader. You can have great influence. Just polish your skills. Start small. Volunteer to serve on a committee. Slowly build on your committee skills as you decide which leadership styles you admire and are comfortable with. Begin putting them in practice and with lots of hard work, you'll be an effective leader.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE LEADER DESPITE PROBLEM SOLVING ISSUES

Sometimes you know before you go into a meeting that an issue is likely to be controversial. You would do well to bring the issue out in the open before you get into the meeting itself. Talk individually to the persons with strongly opposing views, listen to their sides and offer any comments and guidance you might have. Solicit their cooperation. Tell them you want to have a good spirit in the meeting and don't want the particular issue to evolve into a confrontational situation in the committee or board. Ask for their help in ensuring that God's spirit will be in the meeting.

One skill you should develop is the ability to bring a very important item to a committee or board by talking about it with some of the key members prior to the meeting. This should not be an effort to stack the vote, but rather an effort to educate your members in advance of important issues so that you can gain their support and avoid wasting time in discussing or arguing points. This can definitely help you avoid problems and maintain a harmonious meeting.

How can you lead effectively and resolve a meeting that becomes difficult due to sensitive issues when you see the possibility of confrontation and opposing viewpoints among members? Here are some pointers:

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1. **APPOINT A SPECIAL TASK FORCE** to look into alternate choices and report back to the main group.
2. **ASK A HIGHER AUTHORITY** to help make a ruling or formulate a decision.
3. **VOTE AND LET THE MAJORITY RULE.** Remember, however, that enough time should have been allowed for all sides to present their arguments.
4. **REACH A PERMANENT COMPROMISE.** You will often have to allow the most vocal objectors ample time to present their concerns or solutions.
5. **POSTPONE THE MEETING** until someone who has expertise on the issue being discussed or debated can speak to the group prior to the next meeting. Hopefully this will give more information and data that will support either one viewpoint or the other and help in the decision-making process.
6. **REACH A TEMPORARY COMPROMISE.** Decide to try one option for a specific period of time. See how things go before deciding whether to accept or reject it. If necessary, try another.
7. **ELIMINATE THE POSSIBLE DISCUSSED SOLUTIONS AND SUGGEST A TOTALLY DIFFERENT ONE.** Sometimes conflict can be resolved when none of the discussed options is used, but an additional one that adequately speaks to the topic needing resolution can be brought forward.

Important things to remember in trying to have a harmonious team during problem solving sessions:

- Have all the pertinent facts before bringing the agenda item to the meeting.
- Brainstorm. Stay open to all ideas.

- Allow the group the freedom to share ideas. Brainstorming can be quite productive in generating ideas in a short period of time. Make sure everyone understands the problem then open the floor to everyone's ideas without censor. Moving quickly, list the ideas on the board and evaluate the worth of each solution.
- Don't stifle differences of opinion and disagreements in points of view.
- Let differing sides have equal time to present their points.
- Don't allow personal attacks on any individual.
- Get a consensus on each issue that you discuss before moving on to the next agenda item. This is not always possible but if you have a group that works well together, you can look forward to this the majority of the time.
- Allow room for the proper use of humor. Sometimes it can break the tension in a room when members are weighed down with serious matters.
- Stop and have prayer whenever necessary to ask for God's continued guidance.

PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS (OH-6)

As a leader, you must know what to do when confrontation and problems arise. Here are six steps for problem-solving.

1. **Define** the problem
2. **Analyze** the problem
3. **Generate** a solution
4. **Select** a solution
5. **Implement** the solution
6. **Evaluate** the solution

Closing your meeting

As a good leader, make sure that everyone knows the date of the next meeting, the time, and place. If assignments have been made, ask the secretary to remind each member what they are. If possible, having the minutes typed and distributed to all members within 24 hours after the meeting would be excellent. Also, make sure that you keep an official copy in a safe

place with all the records of your committee/board so the next leader will have clear records of the decisions and actions taken during your tenure. Follow up your meeting with a reminder notice of the next meeting.

MEETING PLANNING (OH-7)

Let's talk about meeting planning. Some people believe that if you really want to accomplish something you need to have a meeting. Others think that meetings actually prevent things from getting done or that they slow things down, are expensive, time consuming, or a waste of valuable time. The expenditure of time, effort, and money can be worthwhile if the people involved take advantage of the opportunities that the meeting provides. Furthermore, well organized meetings not only save time, but also increase productivity. They help us reach goals and make decisions that will see projects move forward. Meetings can be the most efficient means to insure that everybody involved in a project is kept informed and feels a part of the process through exchange of ideas and information. Good meeting planning, therefore, is very important.

THE AGENDA (OH-8)

An agenda shows that you are serious about saving the members' time and really want to accomplish something in an orderly fashion. Most agendas are a single sheet of paper that list the following:

- Name of the committee is on the top line
- Location on the second line (not always necessary if in the same place/office, etc)
- Date on the third line
- The word "AGENDA" on the fourth line in capital letters
- A list of agenda items from the first one you want to discuss until the last. Number each one.
- The word "ADJOURN" or "ADJOURNMENT" at the end

Presenter: Give an example from your local conference or union if possible.

Sometimes it's good to actually print "BREAK" on the agenda to allow for a brief break. In this way, you can control when it is going to take place and discourage people from leaving the room during the meeting or disrupting the committee. Most people will stay until a break if they need to leave early.

If possible, see that each committee member has a **copy of your agenda** at least **24 hours** before the meeting. This will allow them to come better prepared with ideas and questions to discuss. If they don't see your agenda until they sit down at the beginning of the meeting, they will not have had time to think through some of the issues confronting the committee.

MEETING PREPARATION (OH-9)

If you are a new leader, you may want to spend some time *rehearsing your aspect* of the meeting: opening remarks, important points of discussion, etc. There are several ways to do this:

1. **Rehearse in front of a mirror** in the privacy of your own home. This gives opportunity to see how you are coming across. You will also be able to see how much time your remarks take.
2. **Rehearse in front of your spouse, children, or a good friend** and ask them for some feedback. Are you too wordy? Are you speaking to the point? Ask them for an honest critique.
3. **Rehearse using a tape recorder**, then play it back. You will hear how you sound to others when making presentations. This can be an excellent way to reflect and critique yourself.
4. **Rehearse using a video camera**. This is a great way to see yourself, check hand gestures, facial expressions, voice quality. Look at yourself in an objective way to learn how you can improve your presentation to become the best leader you can be. Don't be too critical, though.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS (OH-10&11)

The physical arrangement of your room requires careful preparation. It is just as important as your agenda. Here are some things to consider:

- Do you need to reserve a room?

- What size of a room do you need?
- What kind of equipment do you need? Overhead projector, computer screen, blackboard, VCR, electrical adapters, large pad of paper with markers, microphone, projector, recording equipment to tape the meeting? The list could go on and on. Carefully consider all the presentations to be made and check with the presenters.
- Is the equipment working and do you have everything you need? Test the equipment to make sure you know how to operate it and that it works. This is especially important if using equipment you have not used before. Do you have extra bulbs for projectors, do the markers write well? Do you have chalk and an eraser? Are there adequate electrical outlets and extension cords?
- Are paper and pencils available if you want your participants to use these? Make sure they are available before the meeting starts.
- Make arrangements to have pitchers of water and cups so members can get a drink. In this way, they won't have to leave the room and miss an important discussion or decision.
- How are the acoustics in the room? Do you need a microphone?
- How are the tables arranged? Do they provide for good eye contact and discussion?
- If needed, are signs posted to point the members to the correct meeting place?
- How is the temperature of the room? Do you know how to control it? Remember, if it's too warm some will fall asleep and if it's too cold they will want to rush through the meeting.
- Do you have any other special needs regarding the physical arrangements of your meeting?

ORGANIZING AND HOLDING THE MEETING (OH-12)

It is very important that the meeting be carefully organized. First, you should start and end your meeting on time. If you tend to start 10-15 minutes late, then

the committee members will begin to expect that and they will come later and later. You need to be the regulator. You say a lot about yourself in the way you conduct your meetings. In review, have an agenda, begin with prayer and then start your meeting. Stay calm, and you will be able to express yourself more effectively. Also, try to keep your meeting on target moving toward achieving the goals of the meeting. As the leader, that is your responsibility. At least once or twice during the meeting remind the members of the goals of the meeting and the subject that you are discussing. Don't ramble (or let others

ramble) and use up valuable time. Reach a consensus on the issues before moving on. Make sure you keep an accurate record of the meeting. And, finally, adjourn on time.

MINUTES: RECORD KEEPING (OH-13)

The minutes are an efficient way of keeping accurate records. You are writing the history of your local church, union, or division. Many times ideas come quickly during the course of the meeting. Unless someone is keeping a record of what's happening, valuable information can be lost. Don't count on being able to remember things. Appoint a secretary so that you will have a permanent record of your committee/board activity.

If possible, choose someone who has had some experience in keeping minutes so they will record the events with accuracy. It is not necessary to write down every single detail; rather the secretary of the committee should **focus on several key aspects**:

- Who is in attendance and which committee members are absent?
- What decisions were agreed on either by consensus or were voted on. (If the decision was voted on, who made the motion and who seconded it?)
- What assignments were made during the course of the meeting? To whom were they made? This is very important so that the secretary can follow up this meeting with a letter confirming the assignments with each of the persons involved.
- What is the topic of the next meeting?
- When will the next meeting be held?

Following Through

- I. **Be sure everyone knows their assignments**
If tasks were delegated during a meeting, send those involved reminders of what they were asked to do and when the task should be completed.
- II. **Make progress checks**
See how things are going. Answer any questions. Affirm good work or make gentle suggestions for improvement. Avoid sounding pushy. No one likes to feel like they are being supervised too closely.
- III. **Report task completion**
When a task assigned by a committee has been completed the person given the task should report back to the committee. They should explain how it was completed and what the results were.
- IV. **Take the next step**
Each completed project opens to new possible projects. Your committee should be continually assigning new projects that build on the work of the old and further its stated goals.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE (OH-14)

How do you make a motion? When is it appropriate to ask questions? The purpose of a committee is to formulate actions that will move your organization closer to reaching its goals. Let's take a brief look at some simple steps of parliamentary procedures for committee participation:

MOTIONS

In order to have an item of business considered, you need to make a motion. This is called the "Main motion." To do this you wait until the previous speaker is finished. Then address the chair: "Madam Chair." Or "Mr. President." When you have been recognized you state your motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that" Be as brief and exact as possible. (You do NOT say "I make a motion that....")

Only delegates or members with the right to vote may make motions or speak to motions.

No main motion can be discussed until it has been seconded. The chair may call for a second; if there is not second, your motion dies.

If the motion is seconded, the chair then repeats the motion, saying "It is moved and seconded that" After this happens, debate or voting can occur. While this is happening the motion is said to be "On the table."

A motion can be amended. The same procedure as a main motion is followed. And an amendment can be amended, again with the same procedure.

A majority vote is required for the motion to pass.

A motion is not in order when another motion is being considered.

There are five general types of motions:

1. Main motions
2. Subsidiary motions (amendments, tabling, previous questions, refer to committee, postpone indefinitely, and limit time of debate)
3. Privileged motions (fixing time of future meeting, adjournment, and question of privilege)
4. Incidental motions (points of order, division of a question, and withdrawing or modifying a motion)
5. Motions that bring a question again before the assembly

Some of these that you will want to know more about are:

Question of privilege: This is to complain about heat, noise, etc.

Point of order: This is to protest when something is not done according to the rules. It can interrupt a speaker, is not debatable, does not require any second, or even a vote unless the chair asks for a vote.

Table a motion: This temporarily suspends consideration of an issue. It requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a majority vote. At a later time or meeting someone can move that the motion be removed from that table. This requires a second but is not debatable and requires only a majority vote to pass.

Previous Question: This is a call to end debate and amendments. It requires a second and is not debatable. It requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass. A chair can ask "Are we ready for the question?" to test if people are ready to vote but there is no need to move the previous question or to call question if there is no debate/discussion taking place.

Division: This is to verify a voice vote by having members stand. It can interrupt discussion and does not require a second or a vote.

VOTING

- Voting normally shall be by voice vote (viva voce).
- If there is no objection, the chair can declare a vote by general consent.
- By ruling of the chair or by majority vote of the delegates present and voting, voting can be by raising of hands, standing, secret ballot, or use of electronic device. If there appears to be a reasonable doubt regarding

the result of a vote, either the chair or any member may call for the votes to be counted/recounted (a division of the assembly).

- The chair may ask the secretary for assistance in counting the vote and/or appoint tellers.

We recommend the ***GC Rules of Order** for further information. You can obtain this from the union or division secretariat. Women's Ministries also has an excellent Scriptographic booklet "The A-B-C's of Parliamentary Procedure" which has a helpful chart of motions, voting, and other procedures.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY IN MEETINGS (OH-15)

I. Be confident

When you are confident about the things you say and the material you present, people are more inclined to listen to you. Don't be shy about expressing your opinions. You would not have been asked to join the committee/board if people didn't want to hear what you had to say. Furthermore, if you have confidence in yourself others will sense it and respect you for it.

II. Don't attack

Nothing turns people off faster than accusations. If you have a problem that the committee/board needs to address, describe the situation simply without assigning blame. Also, suggest solutions. Telling about a problem is unlikely to do any good unless you also describe what you think ought to be done about it.

III. Be brief

Communicate your position in as few words as possible. Don't give long introductions, and don't let yourself start rambling. If you stray from the topic, so will the people listening to you. They will best remember what you are saying if it is short enough that they can repeat your main points.

IV. State your needs clearly

Don't drop hints or leave anything up to guesswork. State your needs and goals clearly and precisely. Be sure your listeners understand both the "what" and "why." At the same time, don't be demanding. You are asking for something they aren't necessarily obligated to give you. Many people, particularly men, don't like being told what to do. Avoid the appearance that you are issuing an order.

V. Don't accept interruptions

The vast majority of interruptions occur because the interrupter doesn't respect the fact that another person is still talking. Insist that you be given the respect that you deserve. If interrupted, immediately make eye

contact with the person and inform them politely that you weren't finished talking, and then continue with what you were saying. If the other person refuses to acknowledge your request and keeps talking, speak louder. When others realize that you are serious about the importance of what you are saying they will take it seriously as well.

VI. Watch your body language

Whether we like it or not our ideas are judged not just by what we say but also by how we carry ourselves. When speaking, make eye contact with other committee members. Stand up straight. Hold your head up. Take up space. It is a perceptual trick that people think you are powerful in proportion to how much space you feel comfortable taking up. Don't be afraid to spread your stuff out or walk around a bit during a presentation. One thing you do not want to do is display your purse prominently. Men see purses as "weak" accessories. Leave them at home or keep them out of site.

VII. Ask for responses

If you are afraid of being ignored, ask for a response. Even if those listening think you have nothing worth their attention, they don't want to be caught looking ignorant in front of others by not being able to give an intelligent response. If they have to give a response they will listen in order to know what to talk about-and they just might discover that you have some worthwhile ideas in the process.

CLOSING (OH-16)

Success to you as you develop your skills in planning and leading out effectively in committees and meetings.