
CONDUCTING A BUSINESS MEETING

On the whole, we have found that most individuals who attend an ACA meeting do so to benefit from the experience, strength and hope shared at the meeting. In some meetings sharing time is at a premium, and anything that reduces the opportunity to speak is usually subject to strong objections. Yet, there are times when certain business must be conducted by a meeting. Nominations, elections or filling a service position are the most typical examples.

Here are some other examples:

- changing the meeting focus
- changing the meeting location
- approval or change in format
- configuration of room setup
- method/timing of sharing
- security, safety or grievance problems
- general concerns of the fellowship
- literature
- position on non-ACA materials or announcements
- regular meeting readings
- sponsorship of different events
- voting on Intergroup issues
- finances, including donations to Intergroup and World Service
- ABC representation
- ballot or group conscience issues as submitted by WSO

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A BUSINESS MEETING?

The purpose of the business meeting is to gather the group conscience on an issue, by informed ACA members who attend regularly. There are some issues that may be best decided by the entire group. It is usually not a good idea to conduct business during the course of the meeting (unless there is widespread agreement).

WHEN SHOULD A BUSINESS MEETING BE HELD?

It is suggested that all meetings hold a regular business meeting (e.g., once a quarter). There are a number of factors to be considered.

Formal business meetings can be held before or after a regular meeting. It is suggested that a minimum of one week's notice be given. It is also a good idea to announce the topic(s) to be discussed at the time of the notice. If the issue involves any printed material, a copy of such documents should be made available, if possible.

When a business meeting is duly announced, and possibly only three individuals show up, the vote of the three constitutes a valid meeting.

WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL FOR HOLDING A BUSINESS MEETING?

Keep it simple. Keep in mind the right of everyone to express an opinion. And remember, participating in a business meeting allows us to practice learned recovery tools!

In conducting a business meeting there should be more of an emphasis on obtaining the feeling of the participants, particularly when there is disagreement. The minority voice is important. It is recommended that everyone have the opportunity to voice an opinion on all issues. It is best to start with the members who have some special knowledge of the issue and then go around the room. On sensitive issues, a "group consensus" approach may be used. The "motion" process can be used as a last resort. In the interest of "unity," it is important, that after understanding the views of the minority, an attempt be made to find an acceptable alternate solution.

There is a principle in Twelve Step programs called "Substantial Unanimity." "Substantial Unanimity" means that any decision reached by the meeting be reflective of the will of the entire meeting group, and not the mere result of the majority of those voting. If an agreement cannot be reached, it is best to postpone discussion, or agree to not vote on the issue. This also applies to matters submitted by the Intergroup or WSO.

It is important to bear in mind the First Tradition, which states: **"Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on ACA unity."**

The Second Tradition should also be noted: **"For our group conscience there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern."**

Normal voting, whether at a regular meeting or a business meeting, may follow the "General Consent" provisions of Article VIII, Section 46 of *Robert's Rules of Order* which states:

"Business can be expedited greatly by avoiding the formality of motions and voting in routine business on questions of little importance, the chair assuming general (unanimous) consent until someone objects. It does not necessarily mean that every member is in favor of the motion, but, that knowing, it is useless to oppose it or even discuss it, the opposition simply acquiesces in the informality...."

WHAT IF THERE ARE UNRESOLVED ISSUES?

Issues submitted by an Intergroup or WSO may require additional information in order to obtain an informed group conscience. A representative from the meeting can be appointed to look further into the matter before taking a vote. Sometimes there are many issues and it might be wise to schedule more than one meeting. There are times when some of the issue might be controversial. If at any time your meeting is in danger of losing its unity over a particular question or issue, then it is suggested that the meeting consider not taking any position. On such issues individual opinions can be submitted to the Intergroup or WSO.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A BUSINESS MEETING?

The results of any decisions or votes should be announced at the next regular meeting.

ACA PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICE

This tri-fold is intended to give ACA Intergroups and ACA groups guidance on conducting their business meetings. This brief overview is not meant to be exhaustive. We hope that the information given here will provide some general ideas and guidelines that will allow our Intergroups and groups to work effectively.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ACA

TRADITION ONE: Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on ACA unity.

TRADITION TWO: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

TRADITION THREE: The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.

TRADITION FOUR: Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve Step programs.

TRADITION FIVE: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.

TRADITION SIX: An ACA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

TRADITION SEVEN: Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

TRADITION EIGHT: Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

TRADITION NINE: ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

TRADITION TEN: Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

TRADITION ELEVEN: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.

TRADITION TWELVE: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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