

## ENCOURAGING MEMBER PARTICIPATION - EXPANDED NOTES

### Who I am and why I agreed to do this presentation

### How I prepared

### What is Brainstorming?

### GETTING PEOPLE TO SERVE ON THE BOARD

Why would people NOT want to serve?

Don't have time/Think it will take too much of their time

Don't think it's important

Don't feel qualified

Don't want to be blamed

How can we overcome these objections?

Estimate how much time is actually involved/ stop moaning and groaning about how hard it is for you

Tell them why it's important to serve on the Board

Have mentoring sessions/Write out job description, what needs to be done when  
Stop blaming the Board. Tell members if they don't like how it's being run, they should volunteer to do it better.

Make it sound fun, interesting, easy, or challenging

Contact people individually and ask if they'd be willing to serve/tell why you think they'd be good at it

Ask for "helping hands"

★ Show them the Templates for Minutes, claim forms etc that are available on the MARA Resources page

### MEETING PLANNING: Before the Meeting

#### What Are Some Reasons People Don't Come?

Inconvenient time, date, or place

★ Don't think their presence will make a difference/think their concerns won't be addressed

Too many meetings

Meetings are too long/too boring/chairs are too hard

Can't find a babysitter

Don't think it's important/relevant/productive

Didn't know about the meeting, or forgot it was today

Something else was more important (Emergency surgery, family funeral, or golf date)

Don't like atmosphere of previous meetings - hostile, argumentative, accusative, gossip session, waste of time

**Meeting day, date, and time** - Convenient day and date was the most frequent item I saw as influencing attendance. And the second was like unto it - Time. Poll your audience and find out what works for most of them, or vary the time so those who can't come to one meeting can come to the next.

★ **Find out what's a convenient location.** - Both convenient to get to, and pleasant to be at.

**Don't have more meetings than you need** - only meet when it's necessary. **If you can, combine a short meeting with another event, or combine an event with another**

**organization. (Examples: Maine Woodland Owners has their Annual meeting at the Ag Show. OR Woodland Owner Appreciation Day - Hosted by:**

**Lakes Environmental Association  
Maine Audubon  
Western Foothills Land Trust  
Loon Echo Land Trust  
Sebago Clean Waters)**

### **ADVERTISING: Getting People to Show Up**

**Encourage Attendance as a Responsibility** (It's up to us to keep the road passable in case of fire...)

**Cut down on the boring meeting stuff:**

**Share your agenda, and ask people to review it in advance.** Include items they care about. (How can we keep our lake water clean? Should we raise our dues?)

★ **Send out the minutes and treasurer's report in advance so they don't have to be read at meeting before approval so they don't doze off before you get to the important stuff like lunch**

**Offer Baby-sitting and Other Services** (Are snacks or coffee provided? Does anyone need a ride?)

### **PUBLICIZE:**

**Use a variety of means to spread the word:** mailings, email, website (post frequently to keep people tuned in), hashtags, posters on your road or wherever your members gather, personalized invitations, hire the Goodyear blimp, stand on the corner with a sandwich board, threaten to drop zucchini on their porch if they don't show up.... Target your invitees. (Does everyone need to be there?)

**POLL: How did YOU hear about this conference?**

**Market your meeting:**

**Think of some solid, exciting reasons why they should want to be there.**

★x3 **Why is this important? Why should they care to come?**

**Why is this relevant for them?**

**What good things have come from past events?**

**What is the value of this event?**

**If you have a guest speaker, what makes them special?** (Not just a resume, but why would a person be interested in listening to them?)

**What will they miss out on if they don't come?** (Will they miss an important learning opportunity? Miss voting on an issue they care about? Miss out on Liz's awesome carrot cake? Are they going to get elected president in their absence? Will you raise the dues?)

**Add some exclusivity** - space is limited - don't miss out on the early bird price - only members and their guests can attend - be the first on your block to get a copy of the bylaws...

**Send simple RSVP's**

**Remind and follow-up**

**AT THE MEETING**

**Start off with a few simple rules - Don't argue; show respect; turn off cell phones; and put babies on "vibrate."**

**Have a good moderator who will keep things on track** (When I was a boy growing up in

Minnesota, blah blah blah....)

**Be friendly.** (No one wants to go to a meeting where they feel ignored, marginalized, or shut out, or where they feel like they're entering enemy territory.)

**Spread infectious enthusiasm.** If you speak as if you are bored, your audience will be bored as well.

**Strive to keep the meeting short.** (Did everyone read the minutes and treasurer's report that were sent out in advance? Any corrections or additions?)

**Practice what you preach.** (Keep your comments concise.)

**Take up less controversial items first,** to warm people up.

**Be prepared with context and data** to back up what you're saying, and to aid in expedient informed decision making.

**Keep choices clear and simple, and take a vote.**

**If possible, have anticipated Motions written up in advance** to save time and make it easier for the Secretary, **but make it clear you are ready and willing to alter them as needed.** (Nothing makes people feel unheard like getting the impression the decision was made before the meeting.)

**Plan to negotiate** - aim high, look for other ideas, accept a compromise.

**Vary the format of your meetings.** (Can you take an on-site hike? Breakout sessions? Table discussions? Hands-on activities? Goat yoga?)

**Use Visuals** - not just power point outlines, but pictures when it helps illustrate without just making it take longer to present.

**Make it interactive** - don't hog the floor. Encourage questions and ideas, and reward those who join in.

**Help others feel ownership of the idea**

**Make Meetings More Fun**

**Use a Team-building game or a Get-to-know-you game.**

**Facilitate networking**

**Can you illustrate a point with a brief skit?**

**Give out free stuff - door prizes, gifts of appreciation, flowers, recognition plaques, fun awards.**

★**Strive to end ON TIME!** People dread meetings that drag on forever. If they know it's likely not to be a huge time commitment, they will be more willing to give up some of their day.

**BONUS MATERIAL - FOR EVENTS: All of the above, plus the following -**

**Target your audience.** Take a survey - what do they want?

**Design a really great program or activity** specifically for your audience

**Reserve your venue early.** Spaces can get reserved way in advance - don't get left out.

**Don't get too fancy.** (Cost vs attraction - sure I'd like a lobster dinner served at a fantastic venue with a great view, but I don't want to pay \$200 to attend a boring meeting!)

**Get a really great speaker.** (What makes a great speaker?) Again, contact them early.

**Be Organized.** Pay attention to the details so nothing gets overlooked.

**Communicate.** Make sure everyone involved in planning knows their duties and follows through. Choose your words carefully to avoid confusion and/or hard feelings.

**Express appreciation.** Make sure everyone involved knows that you value their efforts.