



An InstantNonprofit
GUIDE TO THRIVE

A HOW TO ON:

Running Your Board Meeting

IN 30 MINUTES OR LESS



Introduction

The Goal

Running a board meeting involves asking people (usually your friends, family or colleagues when working with your founding board) to do something they would not normally do. This can create unnecessary stress in the minds and hearts of nonprofit founders who may not have a lot of experience managing people and organizations in the new capacity presently faced. But running a board meeting is just like any other component of operating your organization. With the right framework, you'll be able to facilitate your next board meeting successfully.

And on top of that, we'll teach you how to do it in 30 minutes or less so you and your members can get back to the important work of moving your nonprofit mission forward! Through the proven method outline in the following guide, we can make running your next board meeting easy, and maybe even fun! Our goal in this material is for you to not only give you the help you're looking for to "get through" the learning curve but to **feel absolutely great about it.**

The Breakdown

Soon you'll be walking out of a well-run board meeting with your Directors patting you on the back and utterly impressed with how much of a pro you are. We'll overcome the hurdle of feeling like you have no idea what steps to take leading up to a board meeting. **To do so, we're going to break down this topic into two segments:**

1. Preparation and Mindset:

First, we will cover how to **set up** and **manage** the Board meeting. We'll also include some crucial mindset tips to help.

2. Creating an Agenda

Second, we'll outline a Nine Step Agenda for the meeting that will ensure you cover the most important topics in a timely manner.



Best Practices

Keep in Mind

The following five Board of Directors Meeting Best Practices are crucial for setting yourself up as an effective leader. Utilizing these approaches will boost your confidence, the confidence of your directors, and influence your approach to leading your nonprofit to be the best organization possible.

1. Prepare the Meeting Agenda in Advance

By taking the time to prepare and distribute an agenda before the meeting, you will increase productivity during the meeting by reducing the time it takes to present and review information after the meeting has already started. The agenda will help people understand what to prepare for before they arrive. Allowing them to absorb the information ahead of time will create more margin to ask questions, discuss specifics, and make actionable steps walking out of the meeting.

2. Make Your Agenda Strategic

Don't try to cover too much information during one meeting. Limit your agenda to only a few (1-3) strategic goals during each board meeting. Depending on the number of strategic goals and the number of board meetings scheduled per year, you can adjust your agenda based upon your needs and available time.

3. Start and End On Time

Being an efficient time leader is critical for running a successful board meeting. Having a pre-determined allotment of time and sticking to it is important for honoring your board members' time. By aiming for a reasonable window (e.g. 30 minutes), it gives you space to stay after the meeting for anyone who might have further questions or want to talk more specifics about an agenda item.

4. Address Decisions, Not Updates

One of the best ways to ensure a timely meeting is to address the decisions that need to be made rather than spending the time sharing general updates. At its core, the purpose of a board meeting is to present and clarify information and reports that directly influence actionable items of the organization.



Best Practices

(Con't)

As your board members to send in any information that needs to be considered at the meeting ahead of time in writing. Provide a deadline that gives enough of a window for all members to review before the meeting. Additionally, you can restrict discussion of topics to only those preset in the agenda. This helps the urge to "get caught in the weeds" with unplanned discussions and "topic surfing".

5. Keep Good Meeting Minutes

Reliable notes are essential to reference back to after the meeting. Traditionally you'll assign someone to take notes during the meeting and distribute after its conclusion. We recommend recording the meeting on a device such as a smartphone, laptop, tablet, or personal recorder. This eliminates any miscommunication and relieves the pressure on your secretary as they take notes. Recording the meeting adds an extra layer of insurance in capturing the meeting for later reference. Easy access to technology has removed any reasons not to record the meeting.



The Secret Weapon

The Mindset of the Chairman

The chairman of the board has a role that cannot be overemphasized. They are paramount to not only running board meetings, but in their responsibility to manage the board overall. As you begin to piece together your next board meeting, remember that the chairperson of the meeting sets the dynamics and tone.

The demeanor and authority of the chair is central to keeping control of the meeting. A meeting with a poorly chaired board are typically the number one annoyance for a board of directors and is among the top reasons for resignations from service. The most competent people will be the first to resign, due to meetings running too long, discussions straying from the point of focus, and ultimately creating a stressful environment. Because boards are voluntary, members may choose to allocate their time in a place they find to be more effective and worth their investment.

But not so for your board! You're on your way to keeping every single one of your board meetings running smoothly. With a kind but firm and authoritative presence, you'll be able to guide and interject during the meeting to keep everything relevant.



The 9 Step Agenda

The Need

Often, members of your Board of Directors will see it as their job to ask a lot of questions and explore a myriad of topics. But it's important to show them that the board meeting is not the place to do that. You should be in regular communication with your board members to cover these areas. When it comes to board meetings, you'll want to create a framework for keeping meetings on task and distraction-free. This paves the way for strategic progress towards your organizations mission. And we'll teach you exactly how to do it.

The 9 Step Approach

Often, members of your Board of Directors will see it as their job to ask a lot of questions and explore a myriad of topics. But it's important to show them that the board meeting is not the place to do that. You should be in regular communication with your board members to cover these areas.

When it comes to board meetings, you'll want to create a framework for keeping meetings on task and distraction-free. This paves the way for strategic progress towards your organizations mission. And we'll teach you exactly how to do it.

Agenda Item #1: Recognize a Quorum [1 Minute]

The first order of business is to recognize a quorum. This is the number of directors necessary to be present to authorize and call the meeting to order). The chair will determine if a quorum (as defined in your organization's bylaws) is present.

Agenda Item #2: Call to Order [1 Minute]

If a quorum is confirmed as present, the chair will announce "I hereby call this meeting to order." We recommend you refer to the exact time on a clock that is visible to everyone. Ask the Secretary (or your designated note-taker) to start a timer or make note of the time to reference throughout the meeting (Recall: The number one frustration expressed regarding board meetings is poor focus and overly lengthy meetings.)



The 9 Step Agenda

(Con't)

This is the time to set the tone of the meeting. Inside this minute, you'll address everyone with a polite greeting and thank them for attending. You'll welcome new members and thank any special guests for attending (if applicable).

Agenda Item #3: Approve the Agenda [1 Minute]

Following the call to order and polite acknowledgements, the chair makes a move to approve the agenda. If the chair has done their job by completing an agenda template prior to the meeting and sending it out ahead of time, this step should be relatively simple. Ask if all voting members present have had the opportunity to review the agenda. If so, the chair will ask the members to approve the agenda. If a member requests any amendments (either addition or subtraction) to the agenda, the amended agenda may be approved without a vote.

Agenda Item #4: Approve Previous Meeting Minutes [5 Minutes]

This step is a little bit more involved, and therefore will take longer than the first three items. Before conducting any official business or making decisions, the board will usually approve the minutes of the prior meeting. Here is another reason why it is important to circulate the previous meeting's minutes for review ahead of the current meeting. The chair will ask if there are any corrections. If none, the chair will announce, "The minutes of the previous meeting are hereby approved as written." The document then gets added to the organization's corporate records. This may be done without a formal vote.

Should you have a dispute arise regarding an amendment to the minutes, the chair may ask for a vote to determine if the amendment should be adopted. Once the minutes have been approved, the chair will announce, "If there are no further corrections, the minutes stand approved as corrected." The Secretary would then record any amendments to the minutes, before receiving a signature from the chair to make the final document with changes official.

Agenda Item #5: Reports & Communication [5 Minutes]

During this segment, you'll allow board members to share reports that are important to the healthy operation of the organization. Oftentimes the executive director will report, even if they function as a director of the board, as staff are



The 9 Step Agenda

(Con't)

responsible for day-to-day operations. Reports or recommendations by any special committee members may be considered for a formal vote at this point in time and adopted in a resolution. The highlight of this meeting segment is often the treasurer's report (ideally read at the simplest and highest level). Generally, no discussion or action is needed on financial reports. Votes are normally taken only after the annual financial report (official or audited).

Agenda Item #6: Old Business [5 Minute]

Old business consists of items previously discussed that are ready for formal approval. These items may have been brought up at a previous meeting but weren't voted on due to some underlying cause. If additional discussion is required, the chair asks for approval to move those items to the discussion portion of the meeting. All other items should fall into one of three buckets: (1) Items to be voted on; (2) Items to be postponed; (3) Items being tabled.

Agenda Item #7: New Business [5 Minutes]

New business includes items that haven't been previously discussed and are slated in the agenda. Be aware that this is the area where your board can quickly lose focus due to topic surfing. The chair will announce new business items, one at a time, and allow for discussions to commence. It is the responsibility of the chair to keep these discussions focused for the duration of this segment to allow everyone a chance to voice their opinions in the allotted time. The chair may request for members to rearrange the order of items for discussion to maximize efficiency and relevance. The chair should invite everyone to participate and facilitate debates as needed. We recommend the chair limit the discussion of each item to a certain length (e.g. one minute) and use a time if possible (egg timers work well for group visibility). For each item, you may need to (A) call a vote, (B) make an amendment, (C) choose to table, (D) move to a committee for consideration, or (E) postpone discussion. The chair may want to take items needing further development (e.g. a specific project or initiative) out of the domain of the Board for a time and hand off to a committee with specific expertise.



The 9 Step Agenda

(Con't)

Agenda Item #8: Other Business [3 Minute]

Following the new business discussions, the chair will invite those present to bring up any non-discussion items such as announcements, ideas for the organization, or items requiring further discussions. This allows time for consideration prior to adding them to the agenda for a future meeting. For instance, if someone has an idea for an upcoming initiative that will need to be developed by the next meeting, now is the time to bring it up so it can be listed for the next agenda.

Agenda Item #9: Adjourn the Meeting [3 Minutes]

Adjourning the meeting is a brief segment. The chair will review actions taken during the meeting as needed and confirm the date and time for the next meeting. He/she will thank everyone once more for attending. At this point the chair will declare the meeting is officially adjourned. As an important final step, the chair should follow up with the executive officer and review any aspects of the meeting that they need to discuss prior to the Secretary writing the formal record of the meeting in the form of Meeting Minutes.



Conclusion

Review

The total length of the 9 steps provided here is exactly 29 minutes, leaving you one minute to spare! While some board meetings will require more time should you have a robust agenda with a number of relevant items to discuss, using this formula will keep your board meetings simple, focused, and easy for everyone involved. Strong leadership leads to healthier organizations where board members, staff, and volunteers can spend less time in demoralizing meetings and more time putting in the good work to accomplish their mission.

Take Action!

It's time to put your new knowledge to good use! Fill out your next meeting agenda using our 9 Step Agenda and send it out to your board members. Don't forget to keep a copy close at hand when you're running your meeting.

Let's get to changing the world!



If you've found this resource to be helpful, visit
www.instantnonprofit.com or follow us at
[@instantnonprofit](https://www.instagram.com/instantnonprofit) on social media for more.



Get the Templates You Didn't Know You Needed And So Much More...



Let's be real: starting a nonprofit comes with a mountain of "what now?" moments.

This template is just the tip of the iceberg. If you've ever wondered:

"How do I run a board meeting that doesn't suck?"

"What goes in a one-page nonprofit business plan?"

"How do I raise \$12K fast... legally?"

We've got you.

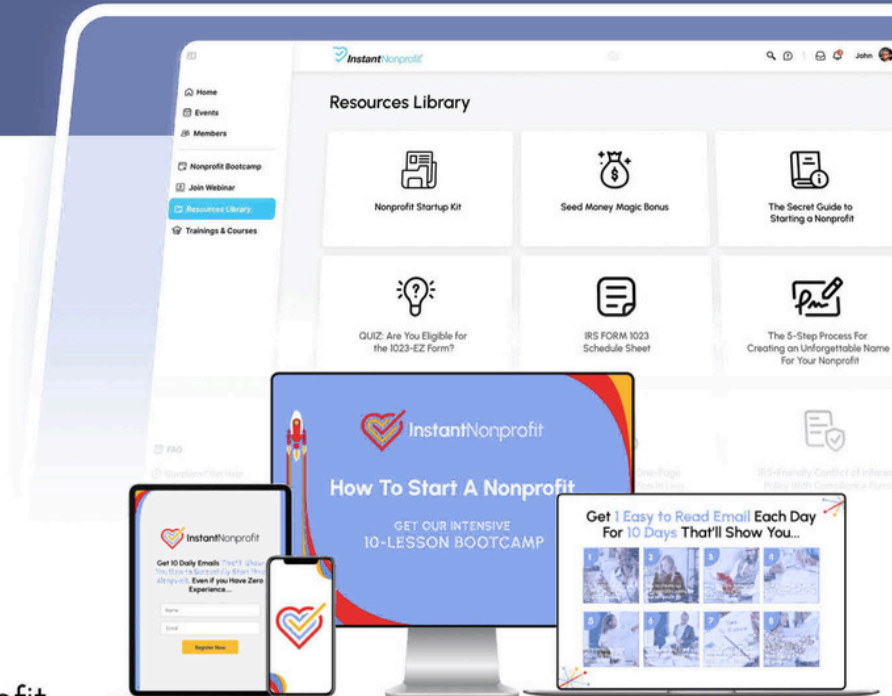
👉 Introducing the Nonprofit Founder Resource Library

It's packed with plug-and-play docs, checklists, cheat sheets, and how-to guides created for founders just like you.

Inside You'll Get:

- Our Nonprofit Startup Kit
- The Secret Guide to Starting a Nonprofit
- Fundraising formulas to raise your first \$100K
- Templates to help with board meetings, bylaws, banking, and more

All in one place. All free.



**Ready to turn
your mission into
momentum?**

**Access the Library +
Nonprofit Bootcamp Free**



So... Are you ready to File Your 501(c)3?



Let's Launch This Thing.

You've been showing up, doing the work, making a difference, but without 501(c)3 status, your mission is flying under the radar

Sounds familiar?

You're not alone! Over 5,000 founders have used InstantNonprofit to break out of paperwork prison and launch their missions, fast.

Here's what you get:

- Articles of Incorporation, EIN, IRS Form 1023 and 1024—all done for you.
- Your own Nonprofit Specialist (yep, a real human)
- Access to your all-in-one Mission HQ Portal.
- 90 days of live office hours and other hand support
- Board & Management Blueprint
- Fundraising training and other resources

200% IRS Approval Guarantee

(You read that right, we know exactly what the IRS is looking for.)

**Get Your 501(c)3 Status Now
+ Learn More About Plans**