

# *Your Role As A Committee Member*

June Cline\*

You have just been asked to serve on a committee? Good for you! And good for your organization, too! As committee members pool their ideas, they are sure to come up with better decisions — and better programs — for their organization.

A committee member benefits personally. As you work on a committee, you will feel a sense of participation and realize how important your ideas are to the organization. A certain sense of satisfaction also comes from committee work. You are sure to feel that you do your part as you help the committee reach its goals.

## *Accepting Responsibilities*

Committee work requires responsibility. You must accept responsibility to give and get the most from your effort. If you cannot accept the responsibilities, decline committee membership or resign from your job. A do-nothing committee member robs the committee of the input it needs.

Committee members are responsible for:

- Thinking through the committee's goals to make sure committee tasks will accomplish these goals.
- Completing all assigned tasks before and after the committee meeting.
- Adding items to the agenda when necessary.
- Attending all committee meetings. (If you cannot attend, notify the chairman before the meeting. After the meeting, check with the chairman to find out what you missed and need to do for the committee.)
- Taking part in discussions, carefully staying on the subject.

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- Helping the committee reach a group decision and then supporting that decision.
- Assisting the chairman in preparing a final report if there is to be one.
- Reporting to your organization when appropriate.
- If the committee does not have a recorder, one of the committee members should be assigned to act as committee recorder. This responsibility should be assigned and accepted on an individual basis.

### *Communicating Ideas*

Committees depend on communication as they seek to form new ideas and reach decisions. That means that committee members must communicate. Of course, it may take several meetings before committee efforts begin to show goal accomplishment.

As you carry on committee discussions, try to express yourself easily and clearly. Take time to listen objectively and enjoy the give and take of exchanging ideas with others.

These tips may help you make committee discussions more effective:

- Avoid personal identification with an idea when possible. Say “The club members I have talked to say . . .” or “I’ve heard others comment that . . .” — if you really are reporting others’ ideas.
- Be as specific as possible. For example, say “Two people told me that . . .” or “They voted 19 to 1 to . . .”
- Remember that good communication includes complimenting good ideas as well as criticizing poor ideas. Sincere compliments help develop a supportive attitude in the committee.
- Try to be flexible and open-minded when considering ideas.
- Disagree with an idea, not the person who presents the idea.
- Be sure of the words you use. If you use a word that is unfamiliar to the committee, define it. If you use a word that could be misinterpreted, be sure the committee understands your usage.
- Ask questions if you do not understand something.



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