

Conducting Business Better

At the *Strengthening My Recovery* ACA Meeting

April 2023, Eddie B and Jim R

To be involved in the development of a Business Meeting practice, write to us at:

12steps4jimr@gmail.com, subject: SMR Business

Overview

Adopted by a motion in March, this review of our business practices will help us a more effective and inclusive means of conducting business. This is expected to take months, involve as many people who are willing and utilize meeting announcements, mailings, polling breakout room discussions and postings on our website.

The effort may be similar to the SMR Script review of 2021. That work is documented on our website at <https://www.acamorning.org/meeting-script/>. There you will find a link to the step-by-step details of the process.

The work we produce will be documented. Meetings may also be recorded, to allow everyone to experience the process.

Meeting Evaluation

What is the purpose of a business meeting?

What are some of our values as a group?

Consider our personal beliefs and how they may differ from the beliefs of others.

Taking Stock

Our group assets, tools and resources

- Our members and their experience, strength and hope
- Our script and meeting practices
- Our fellowship activities
- The website, acamorning.org
- Our Zoom account
- Our mailing list
- Surveying/polling abilities
- World Service Organization resources
- What's App communications
- Slack potentials

Our current business meeting practices

- Schedule/Timing and duration

The business meeting has been scheduled for the 3rd Monday of the month, after the newcomer portion of the meeting, generally lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. Sometimes it has run longer.

- Roles: Chair, Recording Secretary, Timekeeper

These roles are needed for the functioning of the meeting, though often only the Chair has been scheduled.

- Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was typically created by the Chair, with invitations to everyone to suggest items. We've had a history of old business piling up if we did not get to all the items. Additionally we instituted a policy of only addressing items if the member who suggested it were present at that month's business meeting.

The agenda has been posted to our website in advance of the business meeting

- Script

We have never had a business meeting script or outline as thorough or comprehensive as the script of our meditation meeting.

- Opening readings

Over the years there has been a mix of readings, usually including the Serenity Prayer, along with Traditions and the Commitment to Service.

- Minutes

The minutes of the business meeting have been compiled by the recording secretary that agreed to take notes. Sometimes they have made audio recordings and transcribed much of the meeting. The minutes have been posted on the website.

- Committee reports

- Treasurer
- Website
- Communications
- Service
- WSO Representative

The reports are typically published on our website prior to the business meeting.

- Business discussions and handling motions

We have experienced a wide variety of approaches to discussing issues and handling motions. Issues have often been presented in the form of motions. Generally, all issues raised by members have been added directly to the agenda, though they may end up being addressed as old business month's later. There may or may not be a record of contact information of authors of the agenda items.

When issues are brought to the floor, an opportunity for the authors to explain the issue has been offered. Simple majority vote (50% +1) has established adoption of a motion arising from an issue. Voting has been restricted to only those members present at the business meeting, and who remain at the meeting. We have never closed voting due to lack of participation.

A practice of honoring the voice of the minority opinion and holding a re-vote has been observed. We have moved in and out of following Robert's Rules of Order -

sometimes strictly, sometimes loosely. On occasion we have timed member sharing.

- A Book of Motions

A Book of Motions of the meeting group was begun to be compiled.

- Closing practices

Questions to Consider

Naming

Would it be beneficial to differentiate between a business meeting and a group conscience?

Do they have different meanings and purposes?

Which do we have, and when?

Timing

How often would we want to meet - Monthly, Bimonthly, Quarterly?

How long would the meeting be for?

Would there be a benefit in moving the meeting to different days or times?

Could a routine of alternating between committee report meetings and business discussion meetings be desirable?

What if we had two short meetings on consecutive days, in order to conduct business?

Would a weekend be a better time for members to participate?

Handling Issues and Proposals

What is the current process for making a proposal?

How do members learn about our proposal process and business practices?

Would it be more productive for proposals to first go to a panel that would help the submitter to fashion a clear, focused and measurable proposal?

Do we keep a ready reference of past proposals?

How do we promote participation in the business meeting process?

- Could we utilize our polling capabilities to allow members to vote?
- Could we record our business meeting discussions on Zoom so that members not in attendance may listen in at another time?
- Could we institute a practice of ratifying motions over a '2-meeting cycle' so that members may give extra thought to the proposal and weigh in at the second meeting, before final ratification?

Is there a structure to the way we discuss proposals?

How much of the 'Robert's Rules' format do we want to follow?

If we were to adapt our own process, what would that include? In which steps?

Could a flow chart be created?

How much of a business meeting script do we presently have?

Committees

How well are the committees functioning?

Do they meet regularly and where is their schedule posted?

Do they have adequate member participation?

Are new committees needed?

Would committees be created through the proposal process?

Would they be permanent standing committees, or ad hoc - formed to complete a single task?

Background Messaging from World Service

Copied from [Business Meetings - Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families](#)

- *Tradition One Meditation from Chapter 19:*
"Higher Power. I am your trusted servant seeking to support my ACA group and its primary purpose. Please remind me that the life of my program and my own recovery depends upon my willingness to put the group's welfare above my own will. Help me recognize unity."
- *Tradition Two Meditation from Chapter 19:*
"Higher Power. I understand that you make your voice heard in a group conscience. I ask you to remind me that the life of my program and, therefore, my own recovery depends upon my willingness to put the group's welfare above my own will. Where I disagree with the common view of my fellows in service, allow me to state my case honestly and respectfully. Allow me to listen to and consider the views others. May I state my view and support all group decisions, including the ones I might disagree with. Your will, not mine, be done."
- *Tradition Twelve snippet from Chapter 19:*
ACA is a program of people, and therefore a program of diverse personalities. Our membership is made up of people in varying degrees of codependence, addiction, and PTSD recovery. Some of our members are new and still hurting from growing up in a dysfunctional home. Others have worked through some of the effects of being raised in a dysfunctional setting. There will be conflicts, hurt feelings, and differences of opinion in ACA. There will be people storming out of business meetings, thinking they have been poorly treated in the meeting. Some have been mistreated, and some have not. There will be trusted servants believing they have been shunned and unappreciated by the group. There will be game players, not yet committed to ACA recovery, who manipulate others and unwittingly disrupt another's recovery through selfishness. There will be romantic relationships that sour and occasionally spill into meetings. Some group members may unwisely take sides. However, anonymity is there ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. And it works. Each one of the scenarios mentioned above has been met with Tradition Twelve anonymity. Held up against anonymity, our perceived wrongs, gossip, and pettiness hold no light. When we place principles before personalities, we change as people, and we honor ACA. Anonymity ensures that everyone gets collective credit for ACA's success.
- *Tradition Two excerpt on Domination of Service from Chapter 19:*
Conversely, some new leaders try to govern their meeting with a tight fist. They think they know what is right for ACA and the group; there is no room for discussion at business meetings or settings involving ACA matters. These control-seeking members can be disruptive and divisive. They seem to act like "tradition lawyers" and are willing to split hairs over business meeting rules, meeting agendas, and voting procedures. Their short-sighted behavior, if left unchecked, can literally kill the group. Business meeting disputes spill into regular meetings and feelings are hurt and resentments fester. Members stop attending the group or feel unsafe to support the group. The group suffers until someone asks a loving God to enter a group business meeting and their regular meetings. Group members may rise up and call a special meeting to discuss the group's direction. If circumstances have deteriorated enough, the original founder or trusted servant may be voted out of office. As a result, the disenchanting "leader" may leave

the meeting, feeling abandoned by the group. But the meeting will continue as long as it follows the Steps and Traditions of ACA.

- Our experience has shown that when any body of people join together to do the good work of ACA, it can be helpful to have the group decide together on what guidelines the group agrees to follow. Using the Traditions, the Concepts, the commitment to service (p. 601) can be a great combination in this situation. Additionally, there is some wisdom to be found in the section on page 603 having to do with starting an Intergroup or Regional Committee. Committee work can be done with all voices heard using the group conscience decision making process and/or Robert's Rules also to help keep order. Using common sense and assertiveness as Tradition 9 chapter states, is always a good rule of thumb also.

- *Tradition Nine excerpt from Chapter 19:*

Many of us arrive at ACA wounded and angry. We hurt, so we want to hurt others. However, no one has the right to harm anyone in ACA. We must avoid our misguided attempt to recreate our dysfunctional family system through the ACA group. Angry or disruptive members are usually acting out their family role, unknowingly reconstructing their dysfunctional family setting. Some of us can relate to this claim . We realized that our disruptive behavior allowed us to blame the group. We could avoid working on ourselves by blaming group members for imagined wrongs and slights. The tolerance we found in ACA allowed many of us to change.

- *ACA Commitment to Service page 601:*

"I perform service so that my program will be available for myself, and through those efforts, others may benefit. I will perform service and practice my recovery by:

1. Affirming that the true power of our program rests in the membership of the meetings and is expressed through our Higher Power and through group conscience.

2. Confirming that our process is one of inclusion and not exclusion; showing special sensitivity to the viewpoint of the minority in the process of formulating the group conscience so that any decision is reflective of the spirit of the group and not merely the vote of the majority.

3. Placing principles before personalities.

4. Keeping myself fit for service by working my recovery as a member of the program.

5. Striving to facilitate the sharing of experience, strength, and hope at all levels: meetings, Intergroups, Regional committees, service boards, and World Services.

6. Accepting the different forms and levels of service and allowing those around me to each function according to their own abilities.

7. Remaining willing to forgive myself and others for not performing perfectly.

8. Being willing to surrender the position in which I serve in the interest of unity and to provide the opportunity for others to serve; to avoid problems of money, property, and prestige; and to avoid losing my own recovery through the use of service to act out my old behavior, especially in taking care of others, controlling, rescuing, being a victim, etc.

9. Remembering I am a trusted servant; I do not govern.