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How can we make our committees more effective?

To ensure that committees help the board do its work better, follow these suggestions:

- Assess the effectiveness of your present committee structure. Eliminate any unnecessary committees.
- Turn some committees into task forces with specific time frames.
- Draft a clear job description for each committee. Do not allow the committees themselves to determine their charter.
- Choose committed members who can advance the objectives set for the committee and who are able to actively participate in the work.
- Set meeting schedules well in advance. Take advantage of electronic communication and virtual meetings.
- Set term limits for committee members.
- Regularly assess the productivity of the committees. Don't tolerate substandard results.

From the ASAE list serve:

- the group needs to be clear about their mandate, and what power they have to make recommendations. One of the most frustrating things for me was when it felt like everything we sent back to the Board went into a black hole . . . (this was a while ago, things have improved)
- the timeframe for the committee's existence also needs to be clear - is it for a set period or task, or open-ended? Again a while ago, our group was disbanded in a pretty de facto way, but we weren't really told or thanked.
- the chair needs to be really good at making sure everyone feels included, especially if you have phone meetings. It's easy for one "expert" to take over . . .
- think about what you want them to do, and what information they need to support their work. I kept asking to see the budget for the Web site, and what proportion was allocated for marketing, since we were being asked for input into that - but we never saw this - could have been useful.
- be aware that volunteers have very different amounts of time that they can / will put into any assignments - some will jump in and do tons, others will just show up for meetings. It's important to appreciate everyone as they contribute what they can.

Courtesy of Philippa Gamse, CMC

Website Strategy, Usability & Measuring ROI (in English!)

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