

LEADING A DISCUSSION



Do the discussions at your organization's meetings lack focus? Enhancing *discussion leading* skills will help you direct conversations that meet your group's goals. *Discussion leading* involves developing specific skills to improve the overall quality of communication within your organization.

Here are some guidelines for leading a discussion:

- Conduct discussion with everyone sitting in a circle so that everybody is facing each other.
- If there are people who do not know each other, have everyone introduce and tell a little about him/herself.
- Make sure rules of discussion, such as being respectful, having one person talk at a time, and paying attention to the speaker, are understood.
- Begin discussion by reviewing what was discussed at the last meeting.
- Encourage discussion by asking open ended questions such as, "What does everybody think?", "Is there anyone else who agrees or disagrees?" This will encourage discussion among members.
- Attempt to deemphasize your role as facilitator by involving members in all aspects of the discussion.
- Occasionally paraphrase or restate what someone has said. This will demonstrate that you are *actively listening* (see *Active Listening* tip sheet) to the members of the group.
- Restate the goal of discussion to emphasize the intended purpose of the conversation.
- End discussion by restating decision and main points discussed.
- Provide time for questions or additional points for the members.
- Make yourself available for individuals who may not be comfortable with a group forum.
- Thank everyone for participating in the discussion.

"Leadership should be more participative than directive, more enabling than performing."

- Mary D. Poole