

Observing and Interpreting a Meeting

Observation:

How is the room set up? Who is sitting where? (Draw a rough diagram of the set up, noting where the chair/moderator, members, participants, visitors, etc. are sitting and the location of any kinds of presentation materials (white board, projector, newsprint).)

The meeting was called by the Administrative Council Chair at our Macungie site church. The meeting room was set up in one of the children's Sunday school class rooms. As you entered the room the tables were put together in a large square with chairs all around the table like a horseshoe. There was one chair for that stood alone in the middle of the horseshoe with its back to the dry erase board. There was a projector with a computer beside it by the lone chair centered in the square. The council chairperson sat in that chair flanked on his right was the senior pastor, secretary, and eight other ministry leaders that surrounded the table. At each seat on the table there sat the minutes from the previous month's meeting.

What is going on before the meeting? (Who is talking to whom? What is the mood? What kinds of interactions occur? Is there a written agenda? Did members have materials beforehand or did they receive them as they arrived? Are there refreshments? What are they? Who takes them?)

The meeting is in the evening at the beginning of the week. People begin to arrive and begin talking about the past weekend and their football teams results. The Administration Council chair is talking with the senior pastor and the mood is light and jovial. The agenda for this night's meeting were sent out a week ago for everyone to review and be prepared for the meeting. On the table below the previous month's meeting notes was a copy of the night's agenda. There were no refreshments at this meeting.

How does the meeting begin? (Who calls the meeting to order? How does it get started? What are the initial comments or items of business? Note both the official start to the meeting and any other comments and how this shapes the course of the meeting and the mood of the room.)

The administrative council chair calls the meeting to order by asking the senior pastor to open up in prayer and devotion. This was previously sent out a week prior and on the agenda. After the prayer and devotion the meeting is so moved to the order of business by the chair of council beginning with the finances of the church and the stewardship campaign update. There were several people murmuring in a low tone about their concerns of how the campaign is being run and the consultant company that was brought in to assist. People who were just having good conversation and fellowship started to become more agitated the further the finance chair gave his report. The mood in the room changed within a few minutes to some people shut down and did not share anything the rest of the meeting to a few trying to take control of the meeting through their personal opinions.

What happens during the meeting? (Note two or three significant events or decisions that were made. Describe the process by which those decisions occurred.)

The finance chair giving the update to the churches financial report started off simple enough but the transition to the stewardship campaign was another story. The meeting started to become a free for all disagreement until the chair of the council settled things down and brought everyone back on point for the time being. For the next 45 minutes everything seemed to flow as the rest of the agenda was being completed until the very end when the Chair of council asked was there any new business to discuss. This began with an enthusiastic woman's ministry idea to have a fall women's conference at our new church site in Macungie. The woman's ministry leader was very well prepared to give all the details and answer any questions that may come up. This is where the meeting started to get heated once more. There were some push back from the sports ministry leader due to a conflict with the dates that were introduced. So the women's ministry leader who was very well prepared had several back up dates to provide did not meet any of the approved dates of the sports ministry leader. The council chair intervened as several other ministry leaders started to take sides in the matter as their heated exchanges started getting worse. The chair asked the senior pastor to end in prayer and we would go over this request in our next meeting.

Analysis:

What are your impressions of the meeting (Was it orderly? Was it worthwhile? Was there energy in the room? Where the people engaged in the meeting?)

The meeting was orderly and the chair of council seemed to be well respected. There were several times the meeting seemed to almost get out of hand and yet when it seemed like all chaos would have occurred the chair knew when to intervene and take control of the meeting and get it back on track. Most of the people were engaged and participated in conversation.

What process was used to make decisions? What there more than one?

The meeting was formal and used Robert rules of order for a vote to approve the churches finance consultant company.

What are the outcomes?

**Church finance Consultant Company approved
Tabled Women's conference for the fall until next meetings discussion**

How did people treat one another?

Both respect and some passionate responses but overall ended in unity and respect for other's opinions.

Was there conflict? How was it handled?

Yes, the chair of council handled it with precise timing and mediation.

What was the role of moderator/chair? (How did she/he function in the meeting?)

The chair of council was very knowledgeable and has conducted meetings before. This was evident in how organized he was and when to intervene and when to allow the conversation to continue.

Synopsis:

Write a one page synopsis of the key dynamics of this meeting – both the overt decisions/processes and the underlying organizational issues that you observe. How well did the person leading do? What suggestions would you make? If you were the overall leader of this organization, what steps would you take after this meeting?

As I witnessed the meeting I could tell people were well prepared for the meeting with the weeks' notice of giving the agenda to be prepared and the overall focus of the meeting. The chair was totally in control of the meeting from setting up and being ready 30 minutes prior to the meeting so he could meet and greet everyone before the meeting convened. The leader stayed to the agenda and when the meeting would start to go off course he respectfully brought it back to the focus at hand. One thing I took from the meeting was there seemed to be some underlying issues with the use of the new church. There seemed to be some head butting between the sports ministry leader and anyone else who wants to reserve the building for their respected ministries. During the heated exchange someone added that the building should be shared and not be monopolized by one ministry. I thought the chair handled it well by mediating the situation and moving on so the rest of the agenda would be completed. I might have added that we need to take a look at the current building request policy and try to work this out specifically at the next meeting. I would also task individuals for specific things that need to be done by a certain date and also follow up with them on that date. I would also want to make sure I'm available for assistance going forward. It's important to delegate responsibility but also follow up with everyone to see how

they feel the meeting went. I would also want to follow up with those members who did not engage as much at the meeting to probe and find out why. I believed the meeting met the agenda objectives with new business to go forward.