

# How to have a Successful Committee

ToolTip #10  
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As Neighborhood Associations (NA) grow, projects, events, and activities often benefit by the use of committees. People usually volunteer because of personal interest or commitment. Committees also tend to have greater meeting flexibility, allowing committees to focus and achieve tasks that may be difficult for a larger group. The following are some guidelines for successful committees.

1. **When is a Committee needed?** Committees can be formed to facilitate implementation or to do background research for special NA programs and/or policies. "Standing" committees, such as a steering, budget, or special events committee, can be used to facilitate overall functions of the NA. As a rule, it is useful to form committees if:
  - The commitment of time needed is greater than that available in regular meetings.
  - A smaller number of people are needed to accomplish tasks critical to the entire NA.
  - A few members are interested in pursuing a special task the Association supports.
  - The NA agrees to do a large project that must be broken into smaller tasks.
2. **Who should join a committee?** Once it is decided to form a committee, it is important to find the right people for it. If possible, determine ahead of time the ideal size of the committee, what skills might be needed, and estimated time commitments. Even if a committee is being created during a meeting, be sure to have a discussion about possible needs before asking for volunteers.
3. **How can you provide the foundation for a successful committee?**
  - Be clear on the purpose of the committee and determine how the committee will fit into the overall purpose and structure of the Association.
  - Have someone research other groups who are involved in activities similar to yours and if possible talk with them to share information as well as "lessons learned". Com-Link is always a great source to start with.
  - Either prior to formation of the committee or as its first task, develop an action plan and detail as much as possible, what tasks need to be done, how long they should take, and who will do them. Never minimize estimates of the work or time needed.
  - Break large jobs down into smaller components.
  - Identify any missing "skills" or needs essential to the committee and recruit extra help. Remember, you can ask other organizations, local businesses, or City staff to help.
4. **How can you keep committee volunteers motivated?** Research indicates that there are three main types of motivation: (1) achievement; (2) power/influence; and (3) affiliation/connection with others. Understanding what motivates an individual can help to ensure tasks and potential rewards suit a person's particular needs. (See the reverse side for a "quiz" about your general motivational skills.)
5. **Should you chart your progress?** YES!! If possible, look for ways to measure the success of your project. For example, the success of a fund raiser can be measured in dollars or an event in the number of participants. Keep records for future comparisons.
6. **Should you tell others about your success?** YES!! Committees can report progress at the general Association or Com-Link meetings. Association members can share your progress with other organizations. You can even ask local newspapers to do an article on your project.

## Rate Yourself as a Volunteer Motivator

This worksheet is provided as an idea generator. The theory behind it is simple. The kind of recognition you give is not as important as the fact that you do recognize committees and volunteers for their work.

Instructions: Answer each of the following questions. Then rate your performance in each area on a 1-10 scale (10=best). Then mark the areas you want to improve.

	QUESTION	ANSWER	RATING
1	Do you make an effort to personally thank members that participate on committees?		
2	Do you recognize committee members or volunteers by their names at meetings?		
3	Do you ever get together "over coffee" to talk informally with committee members?		
4	Do you ever ask committee members how they are enjoying the committee or even how they are doing personally?		
5	Do you update committees on what is happening with the overall project or organization?		
6	Do you have special events or times to acknowledge committees or committee members?		
7	When was the last time you told someone "We missed you" when they had been away on vacation or out sick?		
8	Do you ever give a volunteer a special thanks such as a personal letter, phone call, or small gift?		
9	Do you ever ask committees or committee members for their advice or opinions on other Association issues?		
10	If there is a problem with a committee member, do you honestly talk to them about it?		
11	Do you take time to talk with committee members that are leaving about their opinions of what was good and not so good about the experience?		

This Quiz has been modified from the *Community Leader's Guide* and is used by permission from the Institute for Extended Learning, Community Colleges of Spokane & Cooperative Extension, Washington State University.