



Agenda Aggrandizement

99% of all Chapters have meetings. Most of the time, members want to get the meeting over with so we can go out riding. One thing I have always found to help make Chapter meetings flow better is using an Agenda. But I'm always surprised by the number of times a Chapter either does not have an Agenda, or they are only used on rare occasions. This month I want to talk about how Agendas can may any Chapter meeting run more smoothly, and make your Chapter look good to members and guests.

Like a good story, an effective Agenda has an Opening, a Body, and a Close. For the sake of our Chapter meetings, let me call them the Welcome, the Business, and the Good-bye.

Your "Welcome" should be done by the Chapter Director. This is where the CD steps up, and starts the meeting on time. (By the way, I have seen where the CD announces that the meeting will be starting in 5 minutes, so folks should find their seats. I think this is a good practice, too.) The welcome message should address all the chapter members, visiting dignitaries (GWTA officials above the Chapter level) and (most especially) guests. In my experience, it is helpful if the CD can introduce guests by name, and encourage members to say hello. The general order of introductions of those beyond the Chapter level should be: Chairman, Board of Directors, BOD staff, National Executive Director, National Staff, Regional Directors and their staff, State/Provincial Directors and their staff, Chapter Directors and staff from other Chapters, officers from other motorcycle organizations, community leaders such as the Mayor or Chamber of Commerce, and other Community Service groups. Some protocol might have you introduce prospective members before other established officers, and some would have it done afterward. The important thing is to be consistent with such protocol, and welcome all guests warmly.

After the general introductions, the Agenda might include events coming up within the period between the meeting being held and the next meeting (typically a one-month period). The CD might simply refer people to those events as listed in the Agenda, and/or allow their staff to make more comments during the Business portion of the meeting.

The Business portion of the meeting is where the Chapter's various staff members do short & sweet reports. The secretary might make note of the minutes of the last meeting. An event coordinator might encourage folks to be preparing for the upcoming affair. The Ride Coordinator might comment upon the after-meeting ride planned, and other rides in the very near future. Just go down your list of Chapter Staff, and give them an opportunity to share news. The Chapter Web Master might be requesting new pictures or referring people to something they have added to the site. The Recruitment & Retention person might welcome new members, or thank re-newing members. Give your staff an opportunity to shine, and they will impress you. In my experience, it is always better to share the load, and also share the fun when things are going well.

Another Agenda item might allow for visiting Chapters or organizations to make announcements about their up-coming events. Be sure to put this on the written Agenda, so folks will know it's coming up.

Do you print start and end times on the Agenda? My answer is a definite 'it depends'. Personally, I love them. I think it gives people a clue about what's expected, and a guideline. On the other hand, some people (and Chapters) are far less structured than I am. So my advice is to see what works for you and your Chapter. Try it, make adjustments, and try it again. If there are too many issues, do not use times. Simple as that.

Finally, the Good-bye portion of your Agenda and meeting. Of course you want to reiterate the details of the After Meeting Ride, and draw for 50-50. The TA Way also has some good advice when it says to start and end on high notes. Has someone had a big birthday or major anniversary? Then sing something at the meeting to honor that event. Did someone earn an award or get some other recognition? Leverage that at the end of the meeting. Some other fun or funny incident? Then highlight the story with humor and drama, increasing the feeling of community in your Chapter.

If you and your Chapter have never used Agendas, it might be a challenge to get started. If so, remember what Confucius once said: "Learning without thought is labor lost." In other words, lessons learned from challenging the mind are often the most rewarding. Once you have a written Agenda for one meeting, it becomes easier to prepare one for the next meeting. You can spice it up with graphics, your Chapter logo, and other details, but the meat of the matter is how you use an Agenda to run an effective meeting. You can find a sample Agenda (in both pdf and Word formats) in the Tools section of the Chapter Olympics web site, www.gwta.org/olympics.

Agendas help us keep organized on the way to "Destination Friendship". Use them in good health!

Jerry Weltner
National R&R Director (Recruitment & Retention)