



FACE AIDS

Building a global movement of young leaders to fight HIV/AIDS

How to Avoid the Seven Pitfalls of Ineffective Meetings

PITFALL #1: The meeting seems pointless. Attendees wonder, “Where are we here?”

SOLUTION: Set and state objectives.

- Before the meeting, set objectives. You can even e-mail them out in advance!
- At the beginning of the meeting, state the objectives.
 - Sample Objectives: Set event dates, create posters, make a tabling schedule, select businesses to target for in-kind donations, discuss a news article, reflect on a recent fundraiser, pitch op-ed ideas, decide which speakers to invite for a panel, etc.
- At the end of the meeting, review the objectives you’ve accomplished.

PITFALL #2: The meeting is anonymous. Attendees don’t feel connected to one another.

SOLUTION: Make it personal!

- Take time during each meeting to connect on a personal level.
 - Have all members share why they joined FACE AIDS.
 - Start each meeting with an attendance question. Every person can state their name and answer the question of the day.

PITFALL #3: The meeting is dominated by one person. Attendees feel dispensable.

SOLUTION: Involve everyone.

- Use a meeting format that illustrates inclusiveness. Instead of having the Executive Board stand in the front of the room, have all members sit in a circle.
- Include an interactive discussion in every meeting.
- Make sure *all members* have many opportunities to contribute.
 - Rotate weekly tasks. Assign a different person to choose the attendance question, share a news story, or bring food each week.

PITFALL #4: The meeting drags on unnecessarily. Attendees lose focus and leave.

SOLUTION: Respect people’s time.

- Before the meeting, assign an approximate time length to every agenda item.
- During the meeting, wear a watch. Check the time periodically to make sure the meeting is on schedule.
- Divide a complex topic into sub-topics, and cover *only one at a time*.
 - Example: “Today we’re talking about the Global Health Gala. First we will decide a date, then we will choose a location, and finally, we will decide how to advertise.” Each sub-topic—date, location, and advertising—should be a focused discussion.
- Use a chapter shorthand to keep discussions moving.



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- Members can snap to indicate agreement.
- When a member brings up an off-topic idea, put it in the “Parking Lot.” This is a recorded list of ideas to revisit later, at a more appropriate time.
- Not all meetings have to be the same length!
- Be deliberate about who is in the room. Some meetings require all members in attendance, but others require only the Executive Board or members of a certain committee.

PITFALL #5: The meeting is boring. Attendees get restless.

SOLUTION: Switch it up!

- Use the “40-20” rule. In a 60-minute meeting, devote 40 minutes to business and 20 minutes to something interactive.
- Don’t spend the whole meeting sitting down.
 - Take time to move around or do something creative with your hands.
 - Paint banners, decorate cookies, or dorm storm with flyers.
- Break out of your routine to keep members interested.
 - Invite a guest speaker, have a potluck, play global health Jeopardy, watch a documentary, meet outside, have a mixer with a related student group, or host a *Mountains Beyond Mountains* book club.
- Maintain weekly traditions that members can look forward to.
 - Feature a song of the week, video of the week, article of the week, snack of the week, or Kinyarwanda word of the week.

PITFALL #6: The meeting isn’t recorded. Attendees forget what happened.

SOLUTION: Keep a record.

- Record the minutes of *every* meeting to promote productivity and sustainability.
- Use Google Docs. Create a single document for minutes, and update it during each meeting. Give all members viewing access so they can refer back to past meetings.

PITFALL #7: What happens in the meeting stays in the meeting. Attendees stop thinking about FACE AIDS once they leave the room.

SOLUTION: Follow up!

- The night of the meeting, send an email reviewing what happened, specifically highlighting *decisions* made, *tasks* delegated, and *deadlines* set. Include a link to the minutes.
- The email should give members a sense of FACE AIDS-related purpose for the week.
 - “By Thursday, I will email three professors about being on our panel.”
 - “On Friday night I’m selling pizza outside the club from midnight to 2am.”
 - “I have to sell 50 pins by our next meeting.”
- Set concrete asks and deadlines. “Some” is not a number, and “soon” is not a time.
- Don’t leave deadlines hanging. Send a reminder about major deadlines, and stalk members who’ve missed theirs!