



Annual General Meetings

Or 'Can we beat last year's record in getting to the pub!'

(March 2011)

Quite often organisations see AGMs as a real chore and one to be got through as quickly as possible. However for nearly every organisation they are a requirement and so have to be done correctly. But if you plan them in the right way they can be really positive and even **FUN**, as well as ticking the legal boxes. Below are some points to think about.

Why hold them?

- Your rules/constitution may require it
- You may be expected to do so (e.g. by members, the local community, your funders)
- It may be good for public relations
- Celebration! To have a good time and celebrate (for yourselves and others) what you've achieved in the past year.

The 'legal' stuff

- Make sure you play it by the book
- **Check, double and triple check** what your rules/constitution/Memorandum of Articles say about giving notice, agenda, membership, voting, etc
- Do you know who your members are, i.e. the ones who have a vote? You should have a list of them and they will need to be sent an advance notice (the time will be set down in your constitution) and at the AGM will be the ones who can vote (perhaps give them a voting card), as opposed to guests, visitors, interested people, etc. Your constitution may also give members the right to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf at the AGM.
- Pre-planning by the Chair is **ABSOLUTELY IMPORTANT**
- Spend time on the important bits in the agenda (e.g. reading the minutes out of last year's AGM may be unimportant and can be the best way of sending your audience asleep right at the beginning!)
- Sample Agenda:
 - 1) Apologies (if there are any these can be listed on the written agenda which is handed out with the rest of the papers to people as they arrive or held by the Chair for people to view if a long list).
 - 2) Minutes of the last meeting (these should be approved by the meeting and again can be handed out to the attendees or sent out with the advance notice)
 - 3) Matters arising from the Minutes of the last AGM (anything which requires an update/further discussion.)

- 4) Chair's Report-brief highlights of the past year including achievements and perhaps any difficulties. Also it's quite good to give a flavour of what the organisation intends to do in the coming year
- 5) Treasurer's Report & Accounts (these should be in the papers handed out). Again don't read them through but point out any significant issues such as underspends/overspends.
- 6) Appointment of Auditor (only required if in the constitution). Remember depending on your constitution, legal status and annual income this independent person can be a member who is not a committee member, someone locally who is not a member but is skilled in looking at accounts, a qualified 'independent examiner', or a qualified accountant/auditor
- 7) Election of Committee members and Honorary Officers (this must follow the rules set out in the constitution). The proposed names/positions should be included in the papers handed out together with the proposer's name. If you have used a 'poll' e.g. postal vote then the AGM will just announce the 'winners'. Remember that if you have vacancies then perhaps you can ask for volunteers at the meeting to be 'co-opted'.
- 8) Resolutions. If you need to vote on any resolutions such as changes to the rules/constitutions/Articles you need to make sure these are handled as set out in your constitution such as any advance notice, what majority is needed, etc.

Use the opportunity

- Tell everyone about the good stuff and pitch it at who will be in your audience, i.e. your committee members, members, supporters, funders, influential people (e.g. councillors), papers/radio. Tell a good story/stories!
- Use it to find out what is important for your community
- Evidence your good work (photos, quotes, videos)
- To get more support (money, signed up support, new volunteers/activists, public pledges)

'Jazz' it up!

- Make it **FUN**, punchy, interesting, and relevant
- Get your users to do something to show what they've done in the year
- Get a speaker, debate a controversial subject
- Launch of new service, grand opening, etc.
- Be a parasite and do it as part of another organisation's event (e.g. fun day)
- Do a special activity (e.g. carnival workshop, children's workshops)

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