



Unit: Group Decision-Making

Skill 36: Hosting Meetings And Open Forums

Activity B: Parliamentary Procedure

Activity Skills:

Group work.

Leadership Skills:

Running a meeting effectively.

Suggested Level:

Advanced

Time:

30-40 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Copies of the quiz “What Do You Know About Parli Pro?”
- Copies of the Worksheet “Handling a Motion”

Do Ahead:

- Make copies of worksheets

Source:

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BACKGROUND:

It is important to understand the rules and procedures for running any large, professional or public meeting. This activity introduces the basic tenets of parliamentary procedure, the most commonly accepted system for running a professional meeting.

The principles of what we know in America as parliamentary procedure originated in Britain but evolved in the United States. The use of modern parliamentary procedure did not become widespread in the U.S. until after the publication of Henry Martyn Robert’s famous book, *Rules of Order*, in 1876.

The main objective of this activity is to understand the basic vocabulary of parliamentary procedure – agenda, motion, second, debate etc., as well as how to handle a motion – securing the floor to speak, introducing a motion, seconding a motion, debating a motion, voting etc.

If your group does not have a lot of experience with parliamentary procedure you may consider opening the activity by asking your group members if anyone can explain what parliamentary procedure is and how it is used. Also, be sure to ask if they can list places where parliamentary procedure is used.

WHAT TO DO:

Begin by explaining that parliamentary procedure is a system of principles for running a meeting. The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to make it easier for people to work together effectively and to help groups accomplish their goals. Parliamentary procedure should ultimately make it easier to run a meeting, not harder.

Now test the participants’ knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Ask participants to work in groups of 3-4 people to complete the quiz, “What do You Know About Parli Pro.” If you have extra time, discuss the answers as a full group. Otherwise, hand out copies of the answer key and allow the groups to check their answers. Next, tell everyone that you are going to talk more about one of the terms from the quiz—a motion. Ask if anybody can explain what a motion is. **A motion is** a proposal that a group take a particular stand or action on something.

Distribute the handout “Handling a Motion,” and explain that handling a motion usually requires five steps:

- First, an assembly member must secure the floor to speak.
- Second, the assembly member introduces the motion.
- Another assembly must second the motion (to indicate support).
- Next, the assembly debates the motion.
- Finally, the assembly votes on the motion.

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Notes:

Now ask four volunteers to help you demonstrate how to handle a motion by acting out the scenario on the handout “Handling a Motion.” Feel free to pause at various moments to point out the different steps of handling the motion. For the last stage of the scenario, ask everyone to participate by voting on the motion based upon the information provided during the debate.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- What are the benefits of deciding things using parliamentary procedure?
- Can you think of any drawbacks?
- Did you feel you had enough information to cast a proper vote?

Apply:

- Can you think of any settings where parliamentary procedure would make meetings run more smoothly?
- Are there settings where parliamentary procedure might not be appropriate?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Using the dialogue from “Handling a Motion,” as your model, create your dialogue for a scene in which people are handling a motion.

Make a list of places where parliamentary procedure is regularly used. What do they have in common? How are they different? Do you think these organizations could run as effectively without parliamentary procedure?

Write a paragraph considering the challenges of running a professional meeting without parliamentary procedure. What might the challenges be? Why is it so important to have rules to guide a meeting.

Resources and Web Links:

<http://www.associationtimes.com/articles2002/parlpro1102.html>