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In This Issue:
Direct Mail Fundraising,
Part One
"Spelling for Dollars"
How to Hold a Better
Meeting

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The Grassroots Fundraising Journal is happy to consider articles for publication. Please submit copy typed, double-spaced. If computer-generated, please submit highest quality printing possible (no dot-matrix printouts, please). Please do not submit material typed in all capital letters.

Articles will be considered for publication during the nine months following submission. When an article is accepted, you will be notified in which issue of the Journal it will appear. The Journal provides three copies of published material to the author, and pays \$35 per article after publication.

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From the Publisher: The *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* is now completely moved to Knoxville, TN. In our move, we got behind in production, and wish to apologize to readers for the delay in getting the February Journal to you. We have also moved our mailing list onto a computer. Please let us know if there are any errors in your address label.

The Art and Science of Direct Mail Copywriting: Part One

Richard G. Ensman, Jr.

Editor's Note: In looking over our past five years of articles, we discovered that we had never printed an article that covered the basics of mass direct mail appeals. We have talked about various aspects of mail, but have not dealt with it directly as a strategy. This article, the first in a series of two by Richard Ensman, begins a discussion of mail as a fundraising strategy that we will continue through this year.

Are you about to embark on a direct mail fund raising program? Or are you looking for ways to improve an existing program? "The Art and Science of Direct Mail Copywriting: Part One" will introduce you to the basics of direct mail planning and the preparation of the direct mail package's most important element: the appeal letter. "Part Two" will introduce you to the other elements of the appeal package—the brochure, response device, and envelopes.

Here is one short excerpt from a direct mail fund raising appeal:

The clinic served more than 5,675 individuals last year. The orthopedic, pediatric, and obstetrical divisions experienced an increase in service of more than twenty-five percent for each division. This is not surprising in light of the local health planning network's assertion that "commonly used, non-acute medical services in the western catchment areas are present only in five large, centralized downtown health care settings, and a few private practices scattered throughout the area." The nineteen professional staff members in the three divisions generally indicated that patients expressed preference for the new service model.

How does this passage sound? Interesting? Vibrant? Exciting? Not really! While a few health care professionals—

and a random scattering of the letter's recipients—might donate funds to this appeal, it's doubtful that great success will result from such a dry, statistical approach.

Let's consider a revision:

Mary Tina was only two years old. She had just celebrated her birthday. Although she was only one of 5,000 patients, everybody on the staff remembered Mary Tina.

You see, about five minutes after her mother arrived at the clinic with Mary Tina, this little girl's heart stopped beating. Yet, Mary Tina's mother didn't have to wait anxious minutes for an ambulance. She didn't have to worry about a long trip downtown for help. Nineteen competent, caring staff people were there for Mary Tina. Just three blocks from her home.

Mary Tina lived. Granted, her case is a bit unusual. Our staff usually handles more routine need—like sports physicals, children's colds, and the whole range of aches and pains that can make life miserable. But, the point is that we are here. Nearby. Ready to help—anytime.

The second version humanizes the work of the clinic. It tells a story and expresses emotion. It reaches out and grabs the reader. It stands a much, much better chance of success than the first version.

Successful direct mail fund raising depends on organizational competence, a well-defined "target" audience, and a carefully planned case for support. But even with these three elements present, few appeals will succeed without good copy and good graphics. And in today's junk-filled mailboxes, direct mail appeals must often be really good to stand a chance of success.

Despite rising postal rates, direct mail is still one of the most common forms of nonprofit fund raising in the United States. Direct mail is the only way many nonprofits can reach a huge audience at a low per-capita cost. Direct mail is just about the only way many nonprofits can physically bring a message into a donor's home—and keep it there.

Most direct mail appeals contain five key elements:

- the **appeal letter**, which usually describes the work of the agency soliciting funds, as well as the reason for the appeal.
- the **brochure or motivator**, an enclosure which emphasizes some facet of the agency's work in more detail.
- the **response device**, usually a card, which serves as the primary vehicle for the physical gift (check or money order).
- the **exterior envelope**, which contains the appeal.
- the **reply envelope**, which allows the donor to return the response device conveniently, and often at no charge.

Preparing the Appeal

Before the first words are written or the first layout drafted, it's important to know something about the appeal's prospective readership.

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Look over the mailing list. Will the appeal be sent to particular groups of people? Wealthy neighborhoods? Men?

Women? People who tend to be older in age? Or younger? Liberals? Conservatives? People who already know something about the agency? Prior donors? The appeal must be focused squarely on the desires and interests of the its audience.

Imagine a real live individual representing your target audience. Someone you know. Someone you've talked with. Imagine this person sitting in front of you. Imagine yourself asking this person for a contribution. What would you say? What stories or anecdotes would you tell? How would you present your agency? As you prepare the appeal, imagine this real, live person sitting in front of you at all times. Every word you write, every photograph you take, every graphics consideration—from the color of paper used in the appeal to the typeface you select—should be geared toward this person's needs and interests.

Next, select a theme.

Remember that a direct mail appeal is not simply a collection of statistics, facts, and stories. It's not an annual report or a foundation proposal. It's a tightly focused attempt to present a very specific need to a very specific audience.

If you don't have a theme first, think for a few moments about the need you'll be presenting. Think about the problems it will alleviate and the people you'll be able to serve once you have your additional funds. Then, try to describe your need—or your solution—in fewer than five words.

For instance:

- An appeal for funds to expand a hospital's emergency department: "Always awake and ready."
- An appeal for funds to decentralize a youth agency's programs: "Bringing help to your doorstep."
- An appeal for a school's new scholarship fund: "Giving our friends a chance."
- An appeal for a conservation group's attempt to save a wilderness area: "Keeping our world green."

Get the general idea? Develop a theme geared toward your prospective readership. Keep their wishes, ideologies and the climate of the target community in mind. Ask staff, board members and volunteers for help in developing a theme if necessary. And don't hesitate to ask prior donors or friends of your agency for their reactions to your proposed theme.

Finally, remember that person sitting in front of you to whom the appeal is addressed. Since this is a real person, go out and ask him or her about the potential themes.

The Appeal Letter

The appeal letter is the most important part of the direct mail fundraising piece. The letter is a personal communication between you and your prospective donor. The letter gives you a chance—your only chance—to express your concerns and feelings about the problems facing the people you serve.

Remember: the appeal letter is a *personal communication*.

Think for a few moments about the need you'll be presenting. Then, try to describe your need—or your solution—in fewer than five words.

It's directed toward *friends*.

Remember all those letter-writing lessons you learned early in life? Those classic letters you drafted in fifth grade? And the English Composition techniques you learned in college? And those painfully precise letters you learned to write to businesspeople and foundation officers asking for money? Resolve to forget all those lessons as you prepare your appeal. That's right—forget them. Instead, imagine your donors as friends and prepare to draft a warm, relatively informal letter to them.

Although direct mail fund raising contains few "formulas," a few simple copywriting techniques can dramatically improve your appeal's chances for success:

- **Keep your sentences short.** Forget lengthy phrases and clauses and commas. "One idea per sentence" should be the rule. Write quickly in your first draft and aim for a pithy, concise message.
- **Keep your paragraphs short.** Short paragraphs are easy to read and, because they result in lots of white space, create a pleasing visual effect.
- **Use one-sentence paragraphs for major points.** One-sentence paragraphs pack a lot of power. For instance:

It doesn't really matter, I suppose, whether these people receive an education or not. It doesn't matter whether they have modern appliances. And their rag tag clothes are O. K., too. No one complains. Life is simple, the climate is relatively warm, and these good people have never known the conveniences of modern life. So, they don't mind doing without.

But, for God's sake, they need food.

Get the idea? Major points will really stick out when they're emphasized with short paragraphs.

- **Don't get hung up about length.** Most people in nonprofits have a penchant for short, succinct letters and

memoranda. "People won't read long letters," they're quick to exclaim.

But fundraisers know that good donors do take the time to read long letters—and respond to them. The trend in direct mail fundraising these days is toward *longer* letters. It's rare to find an appeal letter under two typewritten pages and four- or five-page letters are not uncommon. Remember: it takes time to explain a message or an issue well. Potentially interested donors will give only if they understand what you're trying to do. And that usually requires long letters.

- **Hook the reader at the beginning of the letter.** Don't begin the appeal with a recitation of service statistics, a recounting of the agency's history, or a preview of your annual report. Begin with a story, or some personal recollections, or client testimonials. Or pose a dilemma to the reader. But don't push the entire opening into that first paragraph. Keep it flowing for ten or fifteen lines down the page. The reader will want to continue.
- **Write warmly and casually—but don't be trite.** Sometimes there's a fine line between genuinely personal communication and near-insulting passages. Contrast, for instance, the difference between these two approaches:

As you can well imagine, we cannot expand the library any further without your help. But I'm still confident that we will be able to unpack those books sometime soon. I'm still confident that we can reopen the community visual department. And, I'm still confident that the smiling faces of our young patrons will continue to grace our doors.

Well you guessed it. No way can our overworked staff and volunteers get those books out of the packing crates. But, you know what? I'm betting that people will help us. I'm betting that you will help us. Am I right or am I wrong? Our staff and our volunteers and our patrons say I'm right. I hope you'll prove it.

- **Underscore to illustrate important words or points—but do so sparingly.** Have you ever seen an appeal letter with every other sentence underlined? These letters convey a "sensationalist" appearance, and look awkward and "busy." Underscoring can be a superb graphic tool—if it's used only a few times in a letter.
- **Remember the essentials of direct mail fund raising.** You must portray a need to readers, using human terms and examples. You must instill in your readers a desire to do something about that need. Then, you have to show how the need can be met—and convince your reader that your proposed solution is viable and worthy of support. Finally, you must convince your reader to act—now.

Whatever your need or cause, your appeal must be built around these four elements if it is to succeed.

- **Use the "P.S." to reinforce the need for action.** Many people read the introductory paragraph of the letter, skip to the "P.S.," and only then go back to read the body. The postscript can be used to suggest the desirability of quick, immediate action: "Please . . . If you put your gift in the mail today, you might well save one additional life . . ."
- **Be wary of gimmicks.** Legend has it that an executive whose secretary was ill for a week tried writing and editing his own direct mail appeal some fifteen years ago. This nonprofit leader, not well-skilled in the mechanics of letter writing, made all sorts of mistakes—grammatical errors, syntax errors, spelling errors. He became so frustrated at his inability to produce a perfect letter, so the story goes, that he just penned in personal notations in the margins, crossed out various material in the letter's body and added material in felt-tip at the end of the letter. And then he sent the draft on to the printer. The agency's donors, knowing the executive well, were so enamored by his somewhat poignant attempt to communicate with them that they contributed at a record-breaking rate.

Potentially interested donors will give only if they understand what you're trying to do. And that usually requires long letters.

So today, we have all sorts of penned-in notations on fundraising letters: felt-tip underscoring, "handwritten" postscripts, handwritten pleas for help in the margins and even simulated coffee stains on appeal letters.

Ask yourself: Is this how a letter to a friend would look? Answer the question honestly and you'll be able to decide whether to include one or more of these "gimmicks" in your appeal letter.

- **Remember that a letter is a letter and not an artistic showcase.** It's true that some fundraisers in recent years have placed photographs in fundraising letters, and occasionally a letter will contain some simple sketches and doodles tastefully presented to the reader. But the written word is still the only way to persuade, to convince, to elaborate. If you have to concentrate on something

Most successful appeal letters are typed (no right-justified margins) and printed in black ink, on a standard white offset stock.

when you develop your first letter, make the text great. Everything else will fall into place later.

- **Use an "everyday" typeface and "everyday" paper stock.** Fundraising novices often believe that a fancy typeface will render an appeal "distinctive," generating lots of contributions. True, the appeal may be distinctive, but it's unlikely to be highly successful. The same principle holds true for elaborate paper stocks, like heavy bond or parchment. Most successful appeal letters are typed (no right-justified margins) and printed in black ink, on a standard white offset stock.
- **Be sure the letter is signed.** It still happens. A fund raising letter will be written by the Chairman of the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the signature section will read: "Sincerely. . . The Buildings and Grounds Committee." That's not exactly a personal touch. An individual should always sign the appeal letter. Some fund raising experts believe that only one individual should sign—and that signatures of people close to the program or cause generate the most credibility.
- **Keep the letterhead simple and dignified.** Many organizations simply use their regular office letterhead for direct mail appeal letters. Some compose a special letterhead with the name and theme of the appeal placed at the top. Either approach is fine. Multi-colored heads, elaborate artwork, or "heavy" listings of names can be overbearing on the reader's eye and should generally be avoided.

Invest time, not money.

The direct mail letter is extremely important to the success of an appeal. Yet it costs little to produce. A two-page letter printed in black ink on standard 20 pound paper might cost as little as \$40 per thousand.

The big investment in appeal letters, ultimately, is not measured in dollar terms. It's measured in creative energy and preparation time. Plan well, draft carefully and revise—and you'll be on your way toward direct mail success.

Part Two will cover the other four elements of the direct mail appeal: the brochure or motivator, the response device, and the exterior and reply envelopes.

Reader's Write

Spelling for Dollars—

An Educational Way
to Raise Funds for School Programs*by Michael J. Valentine*

One cool, March morning as I was explaining one of the more esoteric nuances of personal pronouns to my first period English class, a young girl opened the door and ventured tentatively into my classroom holding a piece of paper awkwardly in her right hand. My class fell silent as they eyed her with casual interest. Even my two card-carrying "motor mouths" took time out from the din they usually created and watched her in a way that reminded me of a cat taking first notice of an errant mouse. Self-consciously aware of the 25 pairs of eyes trained on her, the girl approached me wordlessly, turning to leave even as she extended her hand. I looked at her quizzically as I clasped the paper, then noticed that it was a \$25 check made out to the City of Hope. "Thank you," I said as she retreated out the door, but she didn't reply. Smiling inwardly, I realized that with this check, the Spell-A-Thon I had worked so hard to sell to the school administration and staff had passed the \$1000 mark in net proceeds. At last there was no doubt—the event was an unqualified success.

I didn't know it at the time but more than \$2000 was still to come.

Michael J. Valentine is a teacher at Goddard Middle School in Glendora, CA. In addition to teaching, he has a long and successful track record in fundraising, having worked as a consultant designing major fundraising campaigns for several large institutions, and coordinating fundraising for local Muscular Dystrophy organizations.

CONCEPT AND BASIC PROCEDURES

Many of us have fond memories of spelling bees or spell-downs we participated in as elementary school students years ago. Back in the Midwest, our teachers would line us up along the perimeters of our classroom and each of us would wait expectantly for our turn, hoping for an easy word that always seemed to go to someone else. With the radiator fizzing in the background our teacher began the event by pronouncing the first word. We tensed up as our turns approached and breathed sighs of relief if we spelled a word correctly. Yet this momentary relief was always tempered by the knowledge that we would be challenged again with a new word during the next round. Those who misspelled a word were eliminated and trudged back to their seats. As the number of competitors was reduced, we gradually closed ranks toward the front of the room, where our teacher stood between her desk and the 48 star American flag that hung from its staff next to the door. At the end, two students would invariably be left to battle it out toe-to-toe, spelling word after word correctly until one finally stumbled and gave the other an opportunity to win. Then, as the portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln looked down from their honored places above the blackboard, the room would fall silent as the last word was given, and the stillness hung in the air as the student carefully spelled out each syllable. When our teacher declared it correct, we applauded the winner enthusiastically and consoled the 2nd place finisher at recess.

This traditional academic exercise, so simple in structure, can be utilized as an excellent fundraising vehicle in an educational setting. Whether done as a single class project or as an all-school event, the spelling bee can be modified in many ways to fit the specific needs and interests of any school. In fact its chief attribute is its inherent flexibility. It can be administered orally, or as a written spelling test. It can be small and simple, confined to a one day activity in a self-contained classroom, or it can include every staff person, department, and student in the school in an effort involving preliminary competitions leading up to an all-school final to which the entire community is invited. Proceeds can be targeted for school programs or they might be directed (as in our case) to a worth non-profit agency. Unlike many fundraisers, out-of-pocket expenses can be kept to virtually nothing since the only materials necessary are printed pieces (sponsor forms which can be duplicated routinely) and certificates or ribbons which are inexpensive even in large quantities. Yet for all of this, the most attractive aspect of the spelling bee is that it is primarily an educational activity that already has a sound tradition in American education, a tradition based on proven results—improved academic performance.

EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES:

Elementary, Middle, and Junior High School students need constructive, educational and enjoyable outlets to achieve goals by working as a team. A fundraising spelling bee can provide these opportunities in the following ways:

- **Planning and Organization**—Leadership skills can be developed by bringing students into selected phases of event planning and implementation.
- **Personal Development**—Students have opportunities to make contacts in the community as part of prize acquisition and fundraising solicitation. Students may also assist in deciding what school program or outside agency should benefit from the spelling bee.
- **Academic Reinforcement**—Student spelling skills are reinforced particularly if the word list is generated from students regular spellers. Spelling skills may be enhanced if a list of unfamiliar words from an outside source is employed.
- **Publicity and Promotion**—Writing, artistic and graphic skills can be developed as posters, school newspaper stories, press releases and public service announcements are created. A poster designing contest could be organized as a special advance project.
- **Expanding Horizons**—School programs can be used as an educational tool designed to make students aware of school needs or the needs of the recipient agency. Gaining knowledge about school needs and gathering information about charities and their programs affords a significant educational experience for participating students.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING SPELLING BEE:

Our Spell-a-thon culminated several weeks of planning which involved school Principal Gary Rapkin, Assistant Principal Ted McNevin, English Department Chairperson Dorothy Clavin and me. Preliminary meetings were devoted to establishing the dates for the event and in identifying the recipient of the funds we hoped to raise. I had originally suggested the funds be raised for the school itself but after much discussion, we decided to turn the proceeds over to a worth non-profit organization. An entire meeting was devoted to deciding which charitable agency would be the most appropriate, choosing the City of Hope because of its pioneering work in treating catastrophic diseases but also because of its name recognition and close proximity to our school. I served as the school coordinator of the event and handled most of the logistical arrangements. From prior experience I felt the financial success of our efforts would be enhanced by emphasizing its education aspects, a view that was shared by everyone on our planning committee. One way we decided to do this was to introduce the concept of the Spell-a-thon to our nearly 600 students as part of an all-school auditorium program. Our hope was first to achieve the goal of educating them to the mission of the City of Hope and only then showing them how they could help raise the needed funds to assist this facility to advance its important work. We scheduled three separate presentations to be made by a City of Hope representative to each grade level (6th, 7th and 8th) in early February, with the Spell-a-thon itself scheduled over a three day period during the last week of that month. Prior to the presentations, I sent press releases to the local newspapers announcing our involvement in this fundraiser and I designed the sponsor form and the collateral materials we needed to make available to students in the event.

Later meetings were held to discuss the words which would be used in the competition. Since the event was to be held in English classes, several meetings brought together English Department staff to decide on the words to be used and to finalize in-class arrangements. Our goal was to make the management of the event as simple and trouble-free as possible to affected teachers. For this reason, we chose a written format over the oral-recitation variety. Eventually we decided to administer three written spelling test of 40 words each to all students (participants and non-participants alike) with each test being evaluated and scored the same day by PTA volunteers. Teachers could use their own discretion about the words they administered but most opted to give students words already discussed in previous lessons. By the end of the three days each student would know how many words he or she had spelled correctly, an amount that was to be entered onto sponsor forms and initialed by the English teachers who were managing the event. With the auditorium

programs serving as an effective "kick-off", students began approaching friends and relatives for pledges and sponsors, turning in their completed sponsor forms the day before the first spelling test was to be given. After the three tests were administered, their performance was recorded and students again went out into the community to collect on previously committed pledges. They had one week to turn in their money and most students showed great responsibility in this area. Even so, about 15-20% of the participants required follow-up in the form of meetings with me or, in rare cases, (about 15 students out of more than 150 who participated) billings mailed out to their homes. These "hard-to-collect" funds were worth the extra effort however, bringing in an additional \$500 many weeks after the Spell-a-thon had been held.

In early March, about four weeks after the Spell-a-thon, I tabulated the individual fundraising achievements to determine those students who had excelled, and scheduled a picture-taking session with a photographer from the local newspapers. I provided the paper with a press release and a list of students shown in the photo. Shortly thereafter a story (with picture) appeared in the paper which gave these students extra pride and a more tangible expression of recognition for their fundraising accomplishments.

STEPS TO TAKE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SPELLING BEE

With variations, any school administrator, teacher or parent volunteer should follow these basic procedures in order to maximize both the educational and monetary outcomes of the fundraising spelling bee:

- STEP 1** Gain the approval of the PTA and the school administrator to hold the event. If possible and appropriate, establish target dates for both in-class competition and all-school final. For a first time event, give yourself one semester to organize the event.
- STEP 2** Select the school program or the charitable agency which will benefit from the event. Choose an organization that seems to have worthwhile programs and that can also assist you actively in educating your students to the mission and goals of the agency. Begin making arrangements for an appropriate presentation to students well in advance of the date set aside for this purpose.
- STEP 3** Establish a timetable including a list of tasks to be performed and by whom.
- STEP 4** Determine which grades will participate. As a general rule grades 3-7 are most responsive

to such events. Determine what words will be used; these can be derived from the student's regular speller or an outside source. With a large participant pool (60 or more) it is usually advisable to hold in-class competitions before and all-school final.

- STEP 5** Select prize incentives for fundraising achievement and spelling excellence. Simple ribbons or certificates may be awarded or other attractive prizes maybe chosen.
- STEP 6** Provide students with the necessary sponsor forms. Remind students that pledges of five to ten cents per word are appropriate when pledge money is committed. Completed sponsor forms should be returned to the spelling bee coordinator before the competition begins.
- STEP 7** Publicize and promote your bee utilizing students talents in the making of posters and in getting publicity in the media. Involve the school's Art and Journalism students in promoting the event.
- STEP 8** Hold the Spelling Bee. Make sure that all teachers who are responsible for administering the spelling bee keep track of each participating student's progress by recording the number of correctly spelled words and transferring this number to the student's sponsor form. This number is the basis for collecting money after the contest is complete.
- STEP 9** Recognize those students who distinguished themselves either because of their spelling expertise or their fundraising efforts. Simple trophies, ribbons or certificates are an effective way to acknowledge student achievements.
- STEP 10** Follow up. Make sure that participating students collect pledge money promptly after the event. Billing should be considered for "hard-to-collect" pledges.
- A fundraising spelling bee may provide just the right kind of opportunity for a school wanting to expand its instructional program in a unique, new direction while raising revenue for a worthy cause. The educational benefits of this event do, in fact, outweigh the monetary ones; a happy circumstance indeed for any school feeling the need to get "back-to-the-basics". In American education, the spelling bee is about as basic as you can get. Now, as a fundraiser, it can pay off in dollars as well.



Design: Michael Cox

Planning for Fundraising

Our best articles on how to: use summertime efficiently, handle severe budget cuts, and hire staff and consultants. Includes some of the *Journal's* most requested articles, now out of print. 16 pp. \$6 (Postage and handling included.)

The First Five Years: An Annotated Index

Have you ever felt frustrated because you read something in the *Journal*, but couldn't remember which issue? Have you ever wondered

if we've written something on benefit concerts, or making phone calls to prospects, or products for sale? Many readers have requested an index to the *Journal*, and our fifth anniversary seems just the time to publish one. Fully annotated to help you decide what articles would be most useful to you. This index is a must for long time *Journal* subscribers, and helpful to new subscribers wanting to know which back issues are best for them. 6 pp. \$2.50 (Postage and handling included.)

Send check or money order to: **Grassroots Fundraising Journal**, 517 Union Ave., Suite 206; Knoxville, TN 37902

Tired of four-hour meetings?

Don't panic!

Editor's Note: In helping hundreds of organizations with their fundraising problems, we have often noted that fundraising wasn't really the problem—it was either a symptom of a real problem, or the failure to bring in money was caused by another, seemingly unrelated, problem.

In many cases, the problem (or at least one of the problems) in an organization is their inability to carry on their business in meetings. Making meetings work is critical to getting any other work done. Therefore, the Grassroots Fundraising Journal is pleased to present this article as the first in a series of articles on effective meeting techniques. We will look at meetings from several different angles, keeping in mind that each organization will need to find a meeting style that suits its politics, process and goals.

How to hold better meetings

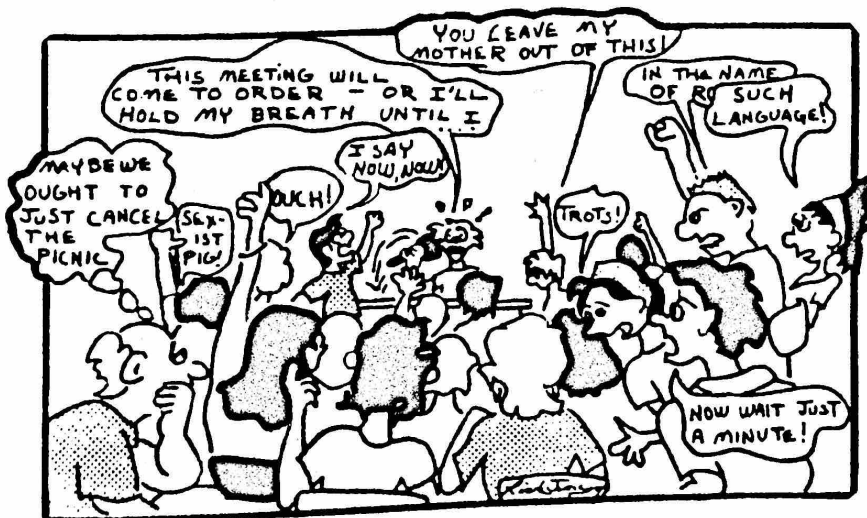
This is the procedure of the Eugene Committee in Solidarity with the Central American People (CISCAP).

Our goal is to have a meeting procedure that's easy to use, yet hard if not impossible to abuse. We want the quiet member to have an equal chance to get his/her ideas out and to keep the overly aggressive from monopolizing our time.

The chair rotates every four weeks. S/he is there to serve us, not rule over us.

Only members of CISCAP may vote, make motions, or offer amendments. Everyone is encouraged to speak up, ask questions, or provide information. Everyone, including non-members, has a voice, if not a vote.

If you'd like to give us feedback on this leaflet or would like more copies, write to CISCAP, 795 Williamette, Room 310, Eugene, Oregon, 97401.



How we do it . . .

Participating

1. If you have something to say, wait until the previous speaker is done. Raise your hand and wait for the chair to call on you. Address your comments to the group, not to individuals in it.
2. After the chair gives you the floor, speak loud enough for everyone to hear you.
3. Stick to the topic being discussed, and indicate when you're through.
4. If you have a concrete proposal, say, "I move that . . ." and briefly state your proposal. Don't leave anything out.
5. A motion is considered by the group only if it is seconded. To do this, just say, "I second the motion." You don't have to raise your hand, just shout it out.

Amending

6. If you think a motion is basically good but needs some minor changes or additions, you can offer them as friendly amendments. If the person who made the motion accepts them, the discussion continues on the amended motion only. If the maker of the motion doesn't agree to them, discussion continues on the original motion only.

Four more points

7. If you have a question about a motion, need information to clarify a discussion, don't understand what's going on, or have important information to give, raise your hand, say "point of information," and then ask the question. The chair should call on you immediately.
8. If you think the chair or anyone else is not following the procedure, raise your hand, say "point of order," and explain your objection. The chair should call on you immediately. Personal attacks are always out of order.
9. You may challenge the decision of the chair if s/he has miscounted a vote, called a vote too soon, grossly favored one side on an issue, or violated the rules. Simply say, loud enough for all to hear, "I challenge the decision of the chair." You will be immediately recognized. When the chair is challenged, the decision of the group is binding.
10. To "table" a motion is to postpone it to another time, either definite or indefinite. This requires a motion: "I move that we table this until . . ."

Voting

11. When all aspects of a motion have been thoroughly discussed, the chair will call a vote: "All in favor, raise your hands. All opposed?" A simple majority of those present decides a question. Any member may abstain. The chair doesn't vote except to break a tie.

and why

1. So that only one person speaks at a time and a quiet member has an equal chance to be heard.
2. Everyone must be able to hear you, or they can't consider your opinion fairly.
3. To avoid confusion.
4. So that everyone can tell the difference between an unfinished suggestion and a concrete proposal.
5. So that the group doesn't spend time on a proposal that has no support.
6. So that we avoid endless discussion of amendments and "amendments to amendments" that destroy the intent of the original motion.
7. This allows important information to be shared without having to compete for the chair's attention.
8. To prevent manipulation and preserve the rights of those who come to our meetings. Everyone has the right to call attention to a break in the process that could lead to confusion or manipulation.
9. To prevent power plays by the chair and correct honest mistakes. To be used only in extreme situation. Normally the chair decides procedural questions.
10. So that decisions which are taking too much time, aren't urgent, or for which we don't have enough information can be postponed until a suitable time and be brought up again later.
11. We vote so that everyone understands what's been decided and how the other members feel. In a diverse group with hopes of growing, consensus is hard to reach. We decide questions by simple majority, though we hope for and often achieve consensus.

12. When a motion seems sure to pass, the chair may use a shortcut in the voting process by asking: "Are there any objections to this motion?" Those who raise their hands will be counted as no votes, those who don't as yes votes.
13. If the discussion becomes repetitive and the chair doesn't call for a vote, anyone can say, "I call the question." This is a motion to close debate; it doesn't require a second. The chair will immediately call a vote on whether to end the discussion. If 2/3 or more vote yes, the original motion is voted on.

12. This saves time and is efficient when used well.
13. This allows anyone to help the chair. Since closing discussion may deprive someone of the right to speak, we require a 2/3 vote for this extreme step.

Notes to the Chair

1. Be prepared! Come early, make sure there are enough chairs, and write the agenda on a large piece of paper posted on the wall. Often members will propose additions. The decision to add or delete items is up to the group.
2. Try to finish the meeting in an hour and a half. Set time limits for each item. If the discussion wanders, draw attention to the remaining items.
3. Open the meeting on time if a majority of membership is present: "Let's get started." Welcome new people, thank them for coming, and lead introductions.
4. AGENDA: Call to order, introductions.

Ask for volunteer notetaker. Minutes include who's there, decisions made, who volunteered to do what, and announcements.

Reading and approval of minutes.

Agenda review.

Treasurer and mailbox reports.

OLD BUSINESS—decisions postponed from past meetings.

NEW BUSINESS.

GOOD AND WELFARE—discussion of health, growth, and welfare of the group. Includes evaluation of the meeting and the chair.

Adjournment.

5. It's the chair's job to recognize people who want to speak. If a motion is made, the chair should state the motion clearly: "It's been moved that we donate \$25 to Amparo. Is there a second?"

If the motion is seconded, the chair asks for discussion and directs an impartial discussion of the question, giving both sides a chance to speak: "Several people have spoken for the motion. Does anyone want to speak against it?"

In putting the question to a vote, restate the motion: "If there's no more discussion, the question is, should we contribute \$25 to Amparo?"

If the motion seems sure to pass, the chair may simply ask, "Are there any objections?" If there are few or none, the motion passes. Otherwise, the chair should ask for a vote: "All in favor, raise your hands. All opposed?"

6. Use brainstorming to get ideas. Of course, you can't do this on every point that comes up. Sometimes you could call on people who haven't participated: "What do you think, Nelly?" But don't push people too hard if they're reluctant to talk. Maybe they have nothing to say.
7. Announce the results of the vote, and take measures to implement it: "The motion carries. The treasurer will donate \$25 to Amparo."
8. Keep the meeting loose and friendly, not stiff and formal. Let people enjoy themselves. If the discussion gets too heated, suggest a short break.
9. Here are some ways to move things along: "Discussion has been going on for some time now. Would someone please make a motion?" "Do you want to reword your motion?" Help the person who made the motion phrase it clearly: "Do you mean . . ."
10. Restrain talkative people within the rules of order: "You've been talking for quite awhile, Karl. Could you wrap it up?" "I'm sorry, but you're out of order."
11. The chair must always stay impartial. S/he doesn't make motions, seconds or take part in discussion. S/he can identify issues and points of agreement, restate ideas, clarify. S/he can ask someone to make a motion if things get to that point. If the chair *must* speak on an issue, s/he must call on someone else to take the chair. Then s/he must follow the same rules of order as anyone else and must *not* resume the chair until the question has been decided.

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