Great chapters have great meetings!

Most chapters meet from four to eight times per year, for about 1.5 hours each time. That means we only have between six to twelve hours to develop activity plans, reflect on past events, hear committee reports, develop and approve budgets, and all the other work of the chapter. There is no time to waste!

Some time wasters:
- There is no agenda
- The agenda is not followed
- The agenda is not what we need to discuss
- Material for the meeting is not sent out ahead of time
- Little gets accomplished
- More than one person talks at once
- Some participants dominate the discussion
- Not everyone participates
- Long discussions but no conclusion
- The meeting goes on too long

Here are some tips to try to implement at your next chapter meeting:

1. Start the meeting on time. Reward punctuality. Consider scheduling social time at the beginning of the meeting for a set time.

2. Avoid automatically covering ‘old business’ at every meeting. Cover only those areas that need to be addressed on the agenda. Perhaps there’s another way to handle ‘old business’ if it keeps coming up on your agenda.

3. Put important issues needing debate early in the agenda. This allows people to respond while they are still fresh.

4. Set a time limit for board meetings and for individual items and stick to it. Negotiate any time extensions with the group in order to keep them aware of time.

5. Have a brief verbal summary at the end of the meeting outlining what was accomplished, next steps and action items.

6. Use a ‘parking lot’ for issues that are off-topic. Sometimes they resolve themselves or become less important or relevant by the time you review them.

7. Consider your objective for each agenda item. Do you need a decision? Are you simply updating everyone? Do we need to brainstorm? Perhaps updates can be sent out with the agenda so as not to take up meeting time. Brainstorming is very creative but needs energy - make sure to put it at the beginning of the meeting and put a time limit on it.

8. Make the meeting fun and informative as well as productive.