

**THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE
“AGENDA - MINUTES - FOLLOW UP”
PLC METHODOLOGY
OF LEADERSHIP**

Hopefully, the following will explain the form, methodology and importance of the AGENDA. The MINUTES should follow the same exact form as the AGENDA - in fact I recommend that the Scribe take his minutes notes right on the agenda provided to him by the SPL. Doing so will force the Scribe to follow the same outline.

The only difference is that the AGENDA is an outline of what will be discussed and decided at the PLC - and - the MINUTES are a BRIEF summary of what was decided at the PLC and, if you want to get fancy, a summary of the discussions, the pros & cons, leading up to what was decided.

IT DON'T MEAN JACK if it doesn't clearly & concisely communicate "WHO - WHAT - WHEN - HOW"

WHO - Who is responsible to carry the plan decided upon forward

WHAT - What is the plan decided upon

WHEN - When is to be done AND (just as important or more) are there reporting dates/events leading up to the event

HOW - How is it going to happen - are decisions delegated to Patrol or Adults that need to help or do things?

Probably the biggest problem that PLC's have in effectively leading the Troop and it's Program is that those responsible to do things are not made part of the decisional process nor ever clearly told, sufficiently in advance to succeed, what & when something is expected of them.

That's where an AGENDA & MINUTES come in! If done properly, an Agenda communicates what has to be done to those necessary to carry the plan decided upon into action - and - does so sufficiently in advance for the plan to succeed. Minutes, circulated as soon after the PLC as practical, communicate the "Who-What-When-How" of the plan decided upon, and then the next AGENDA builds on this by making it clear that a particular person is going to have to report his progress on the plan of action at the next PLC - DID HE DO WHAT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO DO?!?!

I will give you an example of how something that completely failed (Climbing Booth at the '03 Scout Expo that never happened) could have, instead, succeeded if this Agenda/Minutes PLC Method were used:

7/ /03 PLC Minutes

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III NEW BUSINESS

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5. "GWRC Climbing Booth" at the 9/19~9/21 Scout Expo - BRENT SHEEHY & MR. SCHREIBER (ALEX STEFL & JEFF ZACRASIC)

Mr. McGee requested that the PLC help set up & man the "GWRC Climbing Booth" at the 9/19~9/21 Scout Expo '03 at the Lake County Fair Grounds since he & Mr. Sheehy are going to be too trashed from running the GWRC Annual Climbing School the week before. ALEX STEFL & JEFF ZACRASIC will be asked to do so and BRENT SHEEHY has agreed to head this up for the PLC and he will discuss it with them and work with them to get it done - MR. SCHREIBER will be asked to be the adult to offer any assistance & Brent will talk to him as well. EXPO info is on the Council Web site and Mr. Kent Marks (kmhi@nls.net -or- 352-0992) is the GWRC Adult Chair

that Alex, Jeff, Brent & MR. Schreiber will need to contact for any info & to coordinate setting up the booth. BRENT WILL REPORT THEIR PROGRESS AT THE 8/ /03 PLC.

8/ /03 PLC AGENDA

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II OLD BUSINESS

5. REPORT ON "GWRC Climbing Booth" at the 9/19~9/21 Scout Expo: REPORT BY BRENT SHEEHY

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8/ /03 PLC MINUTES

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II OLD BUSINESS

5. REPORT ON "GWRC Climbing Booth" at the 9/19~9/21 Scout Expo: BRENT SHEEHY (ALEX STEFL, JEFF ZACRASIC & Mr. Schreiber)

NOTHING GOT DONE ON THIS - THE PLC DISCUSSED THE FACT THAT BRENT & his event staff need to get this done NOW!!! Brent has assured the PLC that he will do so AND he will report to the SPL on progress BEFORE the next PLC. BRENT agreed to meet with Mr. McGee, Mr. Schreiber, the SPL & his staff BEFORE 8/ /03 to make this happen. BRENT WILL CIRCULATE AN EMAIL WITHIN 3 DAYS OF THE PLC TO CONFIRM THAT HE HAS CONTACTED MR. MARKS AND THIS EVENT STAFF MEETING HAS BEEN SCHEDULED!

9/ /03 PLC AGENDA

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II OLD BUSINESS

5. REPORT ON "GWRC Climbing Booth" at the 9/19~9/21 Scout Expo: REPORT BY BRENT SHEEHY

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Since this PLC Agenda/Minutes method was not used, this is just one example of many things that our PLC did not give sufficient notice for a plan of action to be decided upon, properly followed up and carried into action - and - therefore failed or, at best, would have been done poorly. This is because there was no methodical "notice of what was to be decided - communication of what was decided - follow up" using the PLC and the AGENDA/MINUTES method with regular meetings ... not a series of irregular or emergency meetings ... i.e., the PLC should be the 3rd Thursday of each month for example ... pick any re-occurring date & time!

The challenge for the PLC is to start learning this VERY DIFFICULT skill of delegating and motivating others to get things done. As a Patrol Leader or Patrol Member, you may have been great in getting all tasks assigned to you accomplished BUT THIS IS WHOLE NEW BALL GAME ... CAN YOU MASTER THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO GET THINGS DONE WITHOUT ACTUALLY HAVING TO DO THEM WITH YOUR OWN TWO HANDS?!?!?!?

This is a transition that every SPL & ASPL must struggle with and an new SPL WILL struggle with and therefore a new SPL will need all of the help the Adult & Junior Leadership can muster. Try to follow the tried & true methods outlined above and below - AND - have patience with yourself and the Troop Leadership as you struggle together.

THIS IS WHAT ALL HAVE YOU HAVE DONE SO FAR WAS MEANT TO LEAD UP TO!!!! If you are the ASPL or a PL, try to be supportive of your SPL as he struggles with this difficult responsibility - you will sure wish someone else does so when you are SPL!

THE SPL's TASK THROUGH LEADERSHIP OF THE PLC

The SPL needs to engage in a systematic, consistent & timely method of LEADERSHIP that MUST be based upon a MEANINGFUL inclusion of others in the decisional process AND then effectively communicate (In writing & Follow UP!!!) with key people so they understand what is expected of them, give them the time & tools to succeed, know they are ACCOUNTABLE, and get the appropriate reinforcement for a job well done!

So, how do you do that?!?

1. Effectively involve others in the Decisional Process - AGENDA!!! - get people "VESTED" in the program choices and responsibilities - if the SPL, or an elite few IMPOSE decisions upon others all you do is breed resistance or, at best, indifference. Don't issues edicts from "On High" as if you are the "Burning Bush" or the "Great & Omnificent Oz"!

Example: A PLC member gives the SPL a lot of grief about the SPL calling a last minute "emergency" PLC: Because the SPL was so far behind, the PLC meeting date & time had to be imposed on everyone ...BUT... what if at the next, and hopefully last, "imposed" PLC and you followed an AGENDA whose last standard item was "Adjourn at _____, Next PLC to be _____ at _____ (location & time)"

When you got to this Agenda item, you could say "OK guys, when do you think we need to meet again to get things done in time this time?". If others are involved in the "when & why" the next meeting takes place - AND - are given copies of the minutes of that last PLC SUFFICIENTLY IN ADVANCE of the next PLC to see and know that they were part of the decisional process of when & why the PLC next meets, you would probably eliminate such problems ... AND ... that is just one example of the many other problems of resistance/indifference you would solve.

It may not happen immediately, but it will work eventually if you stick with it. If you know you have someone that is giving you problems on particular issues, engage them in a positive way BEFORE the decision is made. Example: if a PLC member says nothing or just grumbles when it seems like the rest of the groups has agreed on the next meeting date, simply say "Joe, what do you think?" or "Joe, are you OK with that?". If the group or an individual starts advocating something stupid like lets have the next PLC the night before the present meeting plan/calendar runs out, you could say "Is that going to give us enough time to let the Scribe & SM get a calendar out & the Patrols plan their events/presentations?"

Once you get more organized, the best approach is to have the group agree on a regular monthly PLC, for example: the hour before the 2nd Troop meeting of each month.

2. Lock people into, and effectively communicate, what was decided - MINUTES!!! The Scribe should be getting minutes out to the SPL (& cc'd to the SM would be nice) ASAP after the PLC and then before the next regular meeting the SPL should, after any amendments he feels are appropriate, circulate these Minutes to the appropriate Jr & Adult Leaders with initial, and then formal (if necessary) FOLLOW UP.

Example: Send out the MINUTES with a short cover page email reinforcing the fact that the plan THEY DECIDED UPON needs to be communicated to, and carried out by, their Patrols ... AND ... don't give them an out - close by saying "...if you need anything from me or _____ (a particular Jr or Adult Leader) to get this accomplished, please let me & _____ know BY RETURN EMAIL (COPIED TO THOSE INVOLVED), otherwise I (we) will assume that you have everything you need to get the job done. After your next Patrol Meeting of _____ please let me and _____ know who within your Patrol will be responsible for"

If that is too wordy to be effective, try an outline or numbered tasks method:

Dear (Spartan PL & APL),

AS you know, the Spartans are to do the Canoe Skills Presentations at the Mtg's of 6/ 10, 17 & 24 and Mr McGee & Mr Sheehy will help you in whatever you need. I need you to:

1. Pick your 2 canoe instructors (next P mtg) and tell me & Mr. McGee who they are;
2. Meet with the 2 Instructors & Mr. McGee to plan presentations; &
3. Present their "Written Outline of Plan" (copies for all) at the next PLC of 5/10

Then, a follow up informal (verbal) reminder before and/or after that patrol meeting that you need the names of who & how they are going to get the job done would be a great idea. If you are told verbally _____ & _____ are going to work with MR. _____ to get the job done SEND A QUICK CONFIRMING EMAIL TO THE PL, SM, ASM (of that Patrol) AND THE SCOUTS & ADULT/JR LEADER THEY ARE GOING TO WORK WITH CONFIRMING THAT THEY ARE TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS JOB - AND - WHEN THEY ARE TO REPORT THEIR PROGRESS TO THE PLC & COMPLETE THE TASK ... and then always end by confirming "If you need anything from me or anyone else to get the job done, please let me know immediately....."!!!!

Encourage your PL's to have their own agendas/minutes that are shared with key Jr & Adult Leadership to show that the discussion and assignment of that particular task will be timely discussed & decided...if they are really doing their job in this regard, that Patrol will have been part of (VESTED) suggesting the task that was later, and eventually, decided upon by the PLC and sent back to them carry out their idea!!!

3. FOLLOW UP - with key Jr & Adult Leaders, informally as above and, if necessary, formally (IN WRITING) after the initial delegation AND communication (outlined in #2 above) to see that progress is being made (that it isn't going to be slapped together the night before!). Cheat a little at first by assigning initial tasks to "ringers" who you know will do a good job and set the standard by which others are more likely to aspire. If things break down, know sufficiently in advance (probably the week before) that you can have a sit down with the PL, responsible Scout(s), ASM, SM... to get things back on track.

4. REINFORCE - give positive reinforcement for a job well done ... try not to be critical of anything except lack of effort.

5. LOOK AT THE WHOLE PROCESS AS A TIME LINE ... make yourself a flow chart if necessary and plug in action you will take, and results you expect confirmed to you along this time line that ends (does NOT begin) with the date the task is to occur!!!! The date the task or event is to occur is the END POINT and then work backwards in time on your chart to figure out what & when you can act/follow up to make the event/task progress toward success. Keep your communications brief and effective...hopefully far more concise & focused than this epistle BUT this is trying to review some global leadership skill issues that need to be dealt with in depth, so give me a break here.

It will be a lot of work to start up but once you get this methodology in motion and reinforce follow up & accountability, it will save you an amazing amount of time and aggravation.

6. YOU CAN EVEN USE THIS METHOD TO GET THE ADULT LEADERS OFF YOUR BACK!!!

Example: email (TIMELY) to SM, cc'd to ASM's with attachment of PLC minutes and meeting plan outlines - "Please find enclosed the PLC minutes and meeting plan outlines for 9&10/03. If you need anything else from me to complete the Troop Calendar for 9&10, please let me know, otherwise I will assume that you have everything you need and will have hard copies of the Calendar to me to hand out at the meeting of ____". If the adult leaders don't respond to that email, they are in no position to bust your chops about the issue and have no excuse for not getting you the calendar in a timely fashion!!! How much time and aggravation did that just save you?!?!?!?

7. AGENDAS & MINUTES DO NOT HAVE TO BE FORMAL OR COMPLICATED BUT ONLY THE BARE BASICS:

- "Call to Order" - who, when & where present
- "Approval of Minutes" - from last meeting
- "New Business" - what needs to be decided
- "Old Business" - what still needs to be finished or confirmed done
- "Report of Officers - ASPL, _____" - good optional one - ACCOUNTABILITY!
- "Good of the Order" - another optional one for new stuff not on agenda that needs (don't let this run away) to be discussed now or put on next agenda
- "Adjourn" when done & when/where next meeting

IF SOME OTHER METHOD WORKS FOR YOU, KNOCK YOURSELF OUT. If tea leaves & chanting works, go for it, but if your method isn't working try the methods outlined above.

AS SPL, YOU ARE NOT ALONE...EVER SINGLE SPL GOES THROUGH THE INITIALLY PAINFUL LEARNING PROCESS OF MASTERING PLC LEADERSHIP SKILLS.