

Fumbles to Touchdowns

VFW Auxiliary Meeting Challenges & Solutions

Fumble

Members do not know when the meeting is.

Touchdown

The day of the month, time and location of the meeting is voted on and approved by the members. The presiding officer closes the Auxiliary business meeting with "The next business meeting will be..."

Other suggestions for contacting members are telephone calls, e-mails, newsletters or postcards. If your Post and Auxiliary has a website, display this information front and center. Consider a Facebook page for your Auxiliary, an excellent (and FREE!) way to inform members and increase public awareness.

1. Improve communication channels:

- ❖ Use platform: google calendar
- ❖ Automated calendar invite--- send calendar invites for every meeting, so dates/times are saved automatically
- ❖ Use standard naming format--Monthly Auxiliary meeting
Update the same calendar invite instead of sending a new message

2. Use reminders and automation

- ❖ Automated reminders
 - Week before meeting
 - 24 hours before or the day of the meeting
- ❖ Multiply reminder formats
 - Email/text
 - Calander notification
 - In person

3. Accountability

- ❖ Meeting owner: assign 1 person responsible for sending invites (usually the secretary)
- ❖ RSVP requirement: ask members to accept /decline calendar invite (agenda/minutes/treasure report)
 - To see if you have an updated/correct email address

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Our meetings are too long.

Touchdown

A prepared Order of Business/Agenda can help a meeting start and end on time. Business that can be transacted formally, such as making a motion and voting, keeps distractions at a minimum. If an event requires more discussion, invite members to stay after the business meeting for further discussion within.

Have a white board or separate piece of paper to create a "Parking Lot" to hold issues that need to be discussed in depth at a later time. This will table an issue and keep the meeting focused on the business at hand.

Consider the option of a roundtable or contemporary meeting. See the Ritual for guidelines.

Auxiliary Officers knowing their roles and duties beforehand will also help the meetings run faster and smoother.

1. No time control:

- ❖ Assign a timekeeper
- ❖ Start/end on time—even if people are late
- ❖ Stick to what is on the agenda, don't go off script
- ❖ Use a visible timer for agenda items

2. Cut some time:

- ❖ Send shared documents
 - Agenda-know what is going to be discussed
 - Minutes—so it doesn't have to be read, plus if there is any corrections, it gives members time to go through the minutes on their timetable (not being rushed)
 - Treasures report—same as minutes

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There is too much socializing.

Touchdown

If socializing is an important part of your Auxiliary meeting, reserve a half hour prior to or a half hour following the scheduled meeting time for socializing. A designated social time allows the new and seasoned members to get acquainted, share ideas and enjoy one another's company. This reserved time fills this need while being courteous to members who prefer to attend meetings for the business session only.

1. Happy Hour:

- ❖ ½ hour before the meeting have a social hour (or after)
- ❖ Bring some finger food (snacks/sweets)

2. Design the environment:

- ❖ Arrange the seating to reduce distraction (facing forward instead clusters)
- ❖ Space out seating

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Certain members speak too many times.

Touchdown

Leadership of the President can help with membership participation. Encourage members to express their views while being respectful of everyone's input. Limit conversation to the topic at hand.

1. Set clear participation:
 - ❖ Define time limits (2-3 minutes)
 - ❖ State that everyone should have a chance to speak before anyone speaks again
2. Use structured speaking format
 - ❖ Round-robin: each person speaks once in a turn
 - ❖ Hand-raising/stand up: maintain a visible speaking order
 - ❖ Timed turns: use a timer to keep limit
3. Encourage quieter members
 - ❖ Directly invite their input
 - “We haven’t heard from _____ yet, would you like to speak/what do you think”?

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Members see no reason to come or do not feel needed or involved.

Touchdown

Increase involvement by asking for it! An Auxiliary function is the perfect opportunity to ask a member to participate or provide them with a "job." It feels good to be needed. Mentor a new member – offer to pick them up for a meeting or an event. Your personal contact will make a difference. An Auxiliary newsletter or e-mails are other communication tools to request volunteers. Each member has their own special talents; encourage and utilize their contributions.

1. Give members a clear purpose:
 - ❖ Clearly communicate with the group how each member's contribution matters
 - ❖ Shared short stories of impact; (because of you, this happened)
2. Create meaningful roles for everyone
 - ❖ Assign specific responsibilities-even small ones
 - ❖ Match roles to members skills /interests/passion
 - ❖ Rotate roles so everyone has a chance to serve
 - ❖ Make a simple role list and personally invite them to fill them
3. Shift to audience to participate
 - ❖ Ask for input, opinions, feedback—and use it
 - ❖ Involve members in planning/decision making
4. Strengthen relationships/belonging
 - ❖ Follow up when someone misses a meeting
 - ❖ Use the buddy system: have members check in with other members
5. Communicate value & appreciation
 - ❖ Publicly recognize contributions
 - ❖ Thank members personally and often
 - ❖ Celebrating milestones/achievements
 - ❖ End meetings with appreciation moments or shout outs

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There is lack of respect for other members and too much gossip.

Touchdown

A good leader will set the dynamic of the meeting. Effective leadership techniques and a positive manner from the officers and chairmen will help alleviate the negative. Being diplomatic and fair to each member's comments and/or concerns is key.

1. Set clear expectations

- ❖ Establish/communicate code of conduct that define respectful behavior
- ❖ Make it clear that gossip/rumors/disrespectful language are unacceptable

2. Lead by example

- ❖ Avoid participating in gossip and address issues directly/professionally

3. Build awareness through training

- ❖ Workshops on respect/teamwork/communication skills
- ❖ Help members understand the negative impact on gossip has on trust/morale

4. Encourage a culture of Respect

- ❖ Reinforce values like kindness/being professionalism/mutual respect regularly