

Section

7 Effective Committees

Effective Committees

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*Coming together is a beginning
Keeping together is progress
Working together is success*

EFFECTIVE COMMITTEES

Volunteer organizations are especially dependent on well-functioning committees and task forces. Altrusa is no exception. In fact committees could be described as the very backbone of our organization. By delegating the majority of the work to appropriate committees, Altrusa not only shares the work load, but involves members who bring different skills, ideas, and interests. Working at the committee level enhances new members' learning about Altrusa and provides the opportunity for self satisfaction.

For the president

Time spent with the careful development and organization of effective working committees will result in a strong and vital club. Orient your committee chairmen. Your responsibilities are to:

- **See that each member serves** on at least one committee, subcommittee, or task force.
- **Share this section of your handbook** and appropriate materials in the “Leadership Section” with your committee chairs. Remember they are leaders, too.
- **Orient your Committee Chairmen:**
 - Make sure each committee defines goals that relate to the particular function and/or assignment of the committee within the framework of overall program goals.
 - Make sure the Committee Chair and members determine the expected period of time in which a committee job is to be completed. For standing committees this will be one year; however, special project committees may take more or less time.
 - Train your Committee Chairs to carefully and logically plan all activities, making an effort to develop and utilize the talents of each committee member.
 - Make sure your Committee Chairmen are familiar with the club strategic plan. You might highlight the sections that affect their Committee on a copy of the plan for each Chair.

Tips for the successful committee chair

For a committee to act successfully, the following are needed:

- **Consider the skills, knowledge and experience** each member brings to the committee. Make assignments accordingly. Members want to feel good about their contribution.
- **Explain what you want to accomplish** and the deadlines to get the work done. Be specific! There is nothing more discouraging than to have work rejected at its completion. Time spent initially clarifying and confirming what is expected is time well spent. Spending time at the beginning of a project prevents mistakes and misunderstandings that are difficult to correct.

- **Give members** the freedom to think and be creative. Encourage members to think for themselves
- **Explain the purpose** of the assignment and how it fits into the big picture of the project. People are motivated when they understand the reasons for their effort.
- **Set up checkpoints** for mutually determined deadlines. Did you reach an important point on time?
- **Don't rush to the rescue!** Trust a member to complete work as assigned. Encourage her/him to resolve any problem by suggesting alternate solutions and recommendations.
- **Help people to learn** from their mistakes by reviewing the situation and asking them how they would handle it differently the next time.
- **Always praise work** well done!

As a Committee Chairman, at some point you will find yourself working with members with little or no leadership experience. One of your roles will be—through example—to teach organizational skills, delegation, communication, and evaluation techniques.

CUSTOMIZE ACTIONS WITH EXPERIENCE

As a “**people developer**,” you want to be sure that as confidence and experience increase, you provide more opportunities to act with less direction from you. Be cognizant of each member’s level of experience:

1. With a **new committee member** you will need to offer a great deal of advice and direction.
2. With a **slightly more experienced member**, you might expect not only the needed information, but a set of recommendations concerning the issue.
3. In the case of a **well-experienced member** you want to support considerable freedom to act as an acknowledgment of your respect for her/his independence.
4. Finally, with your **most trusted member**, encourage her/him to act independently and report outcomes or results to you. This implies an enormous amount of confidence based on her/his skill.

(Adapted from MacKenzie and Moore, pages 108 – 110)

**Responsibilities
of Altrusa
Committee
Chairmen**

- Know fully the purpose and requirements of the committee.
- Give time, thought, study, and originality to carrying out the work of the committee.
- Be familiar with the club strategic plan and your committee's tasks in relation to it.
- Assist your committee in defining goals that relate to the particular function and/or assignment of the committee.
- Hold regular planning meetings.
- Advise the president of all committee meetings and invite her/him to attend.
- As a committee, prepare both an action plan and a task management sheet for every project. (Samples are in Section 4 of this handbook.)
- Select a committee recorder. Keep thorough records of all meetings and activities.
- Follow through to see that the work is done.
- Do not work as a "loner," doing all the work yourself.
- Be impartial, flexible, humble, helpful, and firm in your determination to reach the goals set by the committee.
- Keep the officers and the club informed as to the progress being made.
- Submit committee reports promptly as requested.
- Have something to say about your committee at each business meeting.
- Plan some manner of transition meeting for the purpose of turning materials over to the next chairman.
- Evaluate each activity with a constructive focus.
- Enjoy the fruits of your committee's labors and share them with other clubs in your District.

Profile of a dream team

Being a Committee Chairman can be a great leadership development tool for the Chairman, and give her/him a great sense of satisfaction. However, it takes time and planning. Working with a committee means developing a team. Share this profile with your chairmen as they develop their teams. A dream team:

- Works towards a common goal
- Develops its members skills
- Uses its time and talents efficiently
- Enhances the diversity of its members
- Commits to continuous improvement
- Builds morale internally
- Performs effectively and produces results
- Accepts praise and criticism
- Cooperates rather than competes
- Uses resources wisely
- Maintains a positive attitude toward everyone
- Stays on task
- Communicates openly
- Learns from each other
- Resolves conflict effectively
- Welcomes challenges
- Shares pride in its accomplishments
- Celebrates successes

As mentioned previously, Section 4 of this handbook deals with planning and especially project planning. On the following few pages is another approach to project planning. Presidents, please share this information with all Committee Chairs.

STEPS IN DEVELOPING A PROJECT		
The project	A club service project is an activity accepted, approved, and sponsored by the membership in response to an identified need in the community.	
State the purpose	The purpose of a project is to take action, in the community, to improve the quality of life.	
Select a project	Identify the most serious community problems. Identify the problems the club can do something about.	
	Club resources	Community resources
	Identify expertise of members	Undertake feasibility study
	Assess interest	Review what others are doing
	Assess commitment	Survey outside help availability
	Estimate member availability	Determine financial obligation
Develop a plan of action	Select a project of high priority for the community. Select a project of high priority to the members. Obtain board approval.	
	Club planning	Community planning
	Clarify goals	Secure permission, authorization, and/or cooperation as needed
	Identify steps required for implementation	Prepare advance publicity
	Develop a time schedule	
	Develop a roster of specific responsibilities	
Implement the project	Initiate/activate Follow-through Involve other groups as partners, if appropriate.	
Review the project	Club aspect	Community aspect
	Is there a continuing interest?	Is there a continuing need?
	Is there a sustained involvement?	Is project revision desirable?

ALTRUSA COMMITTEES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The standing committees of all Altrusa clubs are **Service, Membership Development, Communications, and Finances**. It is important to note that the **Nominating Committee** is a required committee, but stands alone as all its members are to be elected. As the club president it is important that you read both the *Altrusa Bylaws and Policies* and the *Altrusa International Encyclopedia* as they relate to the committees.

Clubs may choose to have other committees. These might include a special project committee or task force, BRR Committee, Hospitality, New Club Building, etc.

No matter how many committees your club has, it is important for you to develop a job description to be given to each chairman. Remember, some of your chairmen may be new members. Use your Club's Strategic Plan, the District Strategic Plan and the International Long-Range/Strategic Plan to help you with the specifics for your club's job descriptions. Sample job descriptions for the standing committees are on the following pages. Fill in the blanks for the appropriate dates, etc., for your club. Use these as a guide for developing job descriptions for your committee chairs. Remember you are a "people developer"; providing your chairmen with job descriptions will help them grow into their tasks.

If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain.

If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees.

*If you want a hundred years of prosperity,
grow people.*

— Chinese Proverb —

Communications Committee **Altrusa International, Inc., of _____**
sample job description **20__ – 20__ Communications Committee**

Chair:

Members (list):

-
- Role**
- .. Produce a monthly newsletter
 - .. Produce annual updated yearbook
 - .. Keep promotional brochures updated
 - .. Produce new brochures as needed
 - .. Produce materials for special projects as requested
 - .. Be responsible for the club's archives
 - .. Forward items to the *District Service Bulletin* editor
 - .. Organize publicity for club activities
 - .. Keep the club up to date concerning any changes from the Bylaws, Resolutions, and Recommendations Committee
 - .. Work with the president to produce a club evaluation form
 - .. Keep updated member profiles for press items and yearbook

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- General items**
- .. Be familiar with the Club, District and International Long Range/Strategic Plan. Study the functions of this committee as it relates to these plans.
 - .. Organize a presentation for the program meeting in _____
 - .. Actively seek articles for the newsletter from all members
 - .. Obtain new member profiles for the yearbook and newsletter

-
- Important dates**
- .. Annual planning meeting on _____
 - .. Written committee report to be given to the president by the first of each month
 - .. Mail newsletter by _____ of each month
 - .. Give new/updated club yearbooks to members by September 1
 - .. Revise and reprint promotional materials by _____
 - .. Submit publicity items for local newspaper by the _____ week of each month

**Service
Committee
sample job
description**

Altrusa International, Inc., of _____

20__ – 20__ Service Committee

Chair:

Members (list):

Role

- .. Organize and coordinate all service activities for the club
- .. Provide updated documentation (files) for all on-going projects to the next chair
- .. Obtain ideas for new service and literacy projects to be presented at the annual planning meeting
- .. Track all service hours and provide totals to the president by May 15th
- .. Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop Service Committee goals and action steps
- .. Work on a Community Needs Assessment
- .. Work closely with the Finances Committee and/or Foundation Treasurer to keep track of service expenditures
- .. Build a network with other service organizations
- .. Keep an updated calendar of activities, number of people needed, hours of work, etc., to be printed in the newsletter and a copy given to the president

General items

- .. Be familiar with the Club, District and International Long Range/Strategic Plan. Study the functions of this committee as it relates to these plans.
- .. Organize a presentation for the program meeting in _____
- .. Submit a major service project for the Mamie L. Bass award
- .. Submit a major literacy project for the Letha H. Brown award
- .. Submit an entry for the Dr. Nina Fay Calhoun International Relations Award

Important Dates

- .. Annual planning meeting on _____
- .. Written committee report to be given to the president by the first of each month
- .. Written report for the annual planning meeting
- .. Submit entries for the Mamie L. Bass, Letha H. Brown and Dr. Nina Fay Calhoun awards prior to District due dates.

**Membership
Development
Committee
sample job
description**

Altrusa International , Inc., of _____

20__ – 20__ Membership Development Committee

Chair:

Members (list):

Role

- .. Identify creative ways of attracting new members
- .. Organize a membership drive
- .. Develop an orientation program
- .. Develop a new member mentor program
- .. Initiate new members
- .. Develop new initiation programs
- .. Assist with coordination of the installation of the board
- .. Revise the membership procedures, as needed
- .. Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to develop membership goals and action steps

General items

- .. Be familiar with the Club, District and the International Long Range/Strategic Plan. Study the functions of this committee as it relates to these plans.
- .. Organize a presentation for the program meeting in _____
- .. Hold quarterly orientation meetings
- .. Hold an annual reorientation meeting
- .. Prepare newsletter articles as requested
- .. Make sure all paperwork is correctly filled out and dues from new members are given to the treasurer prior to initiation.

Important dates

- .. Annual planning meeting on _____
- .. Written committee report to be given to the president by the first of each month
- .. Orientation meetings on _____, _____, _____, and _____
- .. Annual reorientation program on _____
- .. Annual membership drive _____.
- .. Revised membership procedures to the board by _____.

**Finances
Committee
sample job
description**

Altrusa International, Inc., of _____

20__ – 20__ Finances Committee

Chair:

Members (list):

Role

- .. Coordinate the club's finances
- .. Set the members' dues for the year and present them to the board and membership for approval
- .. Find a new fund-raising activity each year*
- .. Organize and coordinate all fund-raising activities for the club*
- .. Purchase all Altrusa supplies
- .. Work with the president and Service Committee(s) to build the club's budget
- .. Provide **updated** documentation (files) for all on going fund-raising activities to the next chair*
- .. Work with the incoming president, treasurer, and foundation treasurer (if appropriate) to develop the club's annual budget

***Note: Some clubs have separate Committee for fund-raising**

General items

- .. Be familiar with the Club, District and the International Long Range/Strategic Plan. Study the functions of this committee as it relates to these plans.
- .. Organize a presentation for the program meeting in _____
- .. Work with the Communications Committee to produce articles for local newspapers about fund raising activities (unless assigned to a separate Committee)

Important dates

- .. Annual planning meeting on _____
- .. Written committee report to be given to the president by the first of each month
- .. Budget to the board of directors by _____
- .. Budget to the membership by _____
- .. Written report for annual planning meeting in April

Nominating Committee **Altrusa International, Inc., of _____**
sample job description **20__ – 20__ Nominating Committee**

Election A minimum of three members elected by the membership. The individual with the most votes becomes chairman.

Period of time One year

Role Make all arrangements necessary for the election of officers

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- Responsibilities**
- .. Review the duties and responsibilities of each office prior to developing a slate
 - .. Study the bylaws to determine eligibility for each position
 - .. Poll members of the group to determine interest in holding a board position
 - .. Prepare a slate of nominees including at least one and hopefully two or three for each position
 - .. Present the slate of nominees to the president, secretary, and membership no less than thirty (30) days prior to the election in March
 - .. Prepare a written ballot to be used during the March election
 - .. Count the ballots and announce results
 - .. Organize a run-off vote if necessary
 - .. Present results to the president, secretary, and newsletter editor for announcement and publication
 - .. Present the list of new officers to the Communications chairman for media announcement

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

The process for nominations and elections is relatively simple and as the club president, you have only one responsibility: **making sure it gets done on time**. You should not be involved in either the nominating or election process except when nominations are read at the time of elections and the ballot is finalized.

Where can I, the president, learn about the process?

The *International Bylaws, Article XIII, Section 1* and the *Encyclopedia*.

Who nominates?

According to the bylaws, the Nominating Committee is to be elected. The committee consists of at least three members who will contact club members to determine interest in running for an office.

Do we need an Election Committee?

No! In most clubs, the Nominating Committee acts as an Election Committee and organizes the election.

Can we vote by show of hands?

No! This is one time you need to vote by ballot. Every member must feel free to vote her/his conscience without the pressure of everyone in the room watching. Remember, you are electing your future leadership and the direction this elected board takes is the direction your club will take in the future.

What do I need to be aware of?

Scheduling! Many clubs forget to put the election of the Nominating Committee on the agenda. This must be done no later than 8 weeks prior to the March business meeting/prior to the election. However, this doesn't give the Nominating Committee time to contact all members, fill all positions with—hopefully—two or more nominees, and announce the slate one month in advance of the election. The process needs to be started much earlier. If the Nominating Committee is elected in November or December, they can begin thinking about their role and how to begin the process in January, and announce the slate of nominees in February.

In March, what is my role in the election process?

You ask if there are any additional nominations for each office. If not, indicate “the nominations are closed.” If yes, proceed with the additional nomination(s) and then indicate the “nominations are closed.”

May I vote during my club's elections?

No! Your vote is saved in the event there is a tie vote. You wait and vote only if needed.

What do I need to know about the International and District elections?

Both International and your District will inform you well in advance and send thorough election instructions. Follow them to the letter and take part in the nomination process. If clubs do not respond, the names of possible nominees are overlooked. **Your responsibility is to make sure your club participates in the nomination process.**

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING A COMMITTEE'S HEALTH

Climate

- ⌞ Does it feel warm, supportive, and friendly?
- ⌞ Are some parts of the group hostile or resistant?
- ⌞ Is the atmosphere comfortable or tense?
- ⌞ Are new members introduced to all other committee members and made to feel welcome or are they ignored?

Interaction

- ⌞ Does the chairperson recognize others or maintain a stony silence?
- ⌞ Is the meeting one of sharing or is it a one-way monologue?
- ⌞ Is all participation directed at the chairperson or is there lively debate involving everyone?
- ⌞ Are there cliques—small groups who appear to carry on their own meeting?
- ⌞ Are there silent members?

Conflict

- ⌞ Is conflict acknowledged and explored or suppressed and denied?
- ⌞ Are different points of view welcomed?
- ⌞ Does the committee identify a range of options or adopt the first suggestion?
- ⌞ Are there obvious winners and losers in discussions?

Decisions

- ⌞ Are decisions made or is discussion circular, without resolution?

Energy

- ⌞ Do you sense enthusiasm, excitement, and passion or is the group flat and unresponsive?
- ⌞ Are there flashes of humor, intensity?

Evaluation

- ⌞ Is the process or the product ever evaluated?
- ⌞ Does the group spend time looking at its own performance?

(MacKenzie and Moore, page 19)